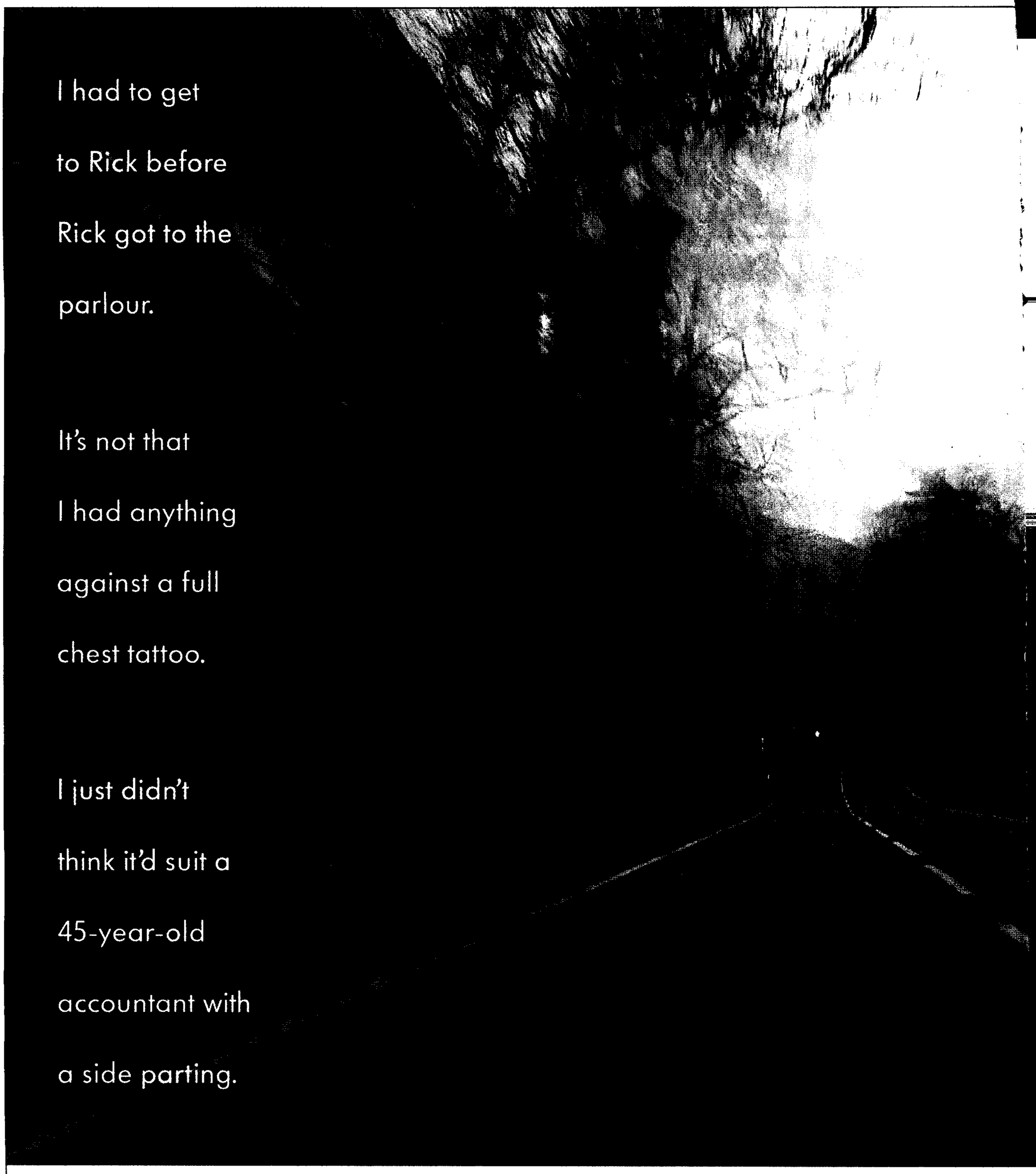
PRIVATE EYE

No. 1188
6 July –
19 July 2007
£1.50

DAWN OF A NEW IRA (SURELY ERA?)

NO SMOKING WHILE READING THIS MAGAZINE



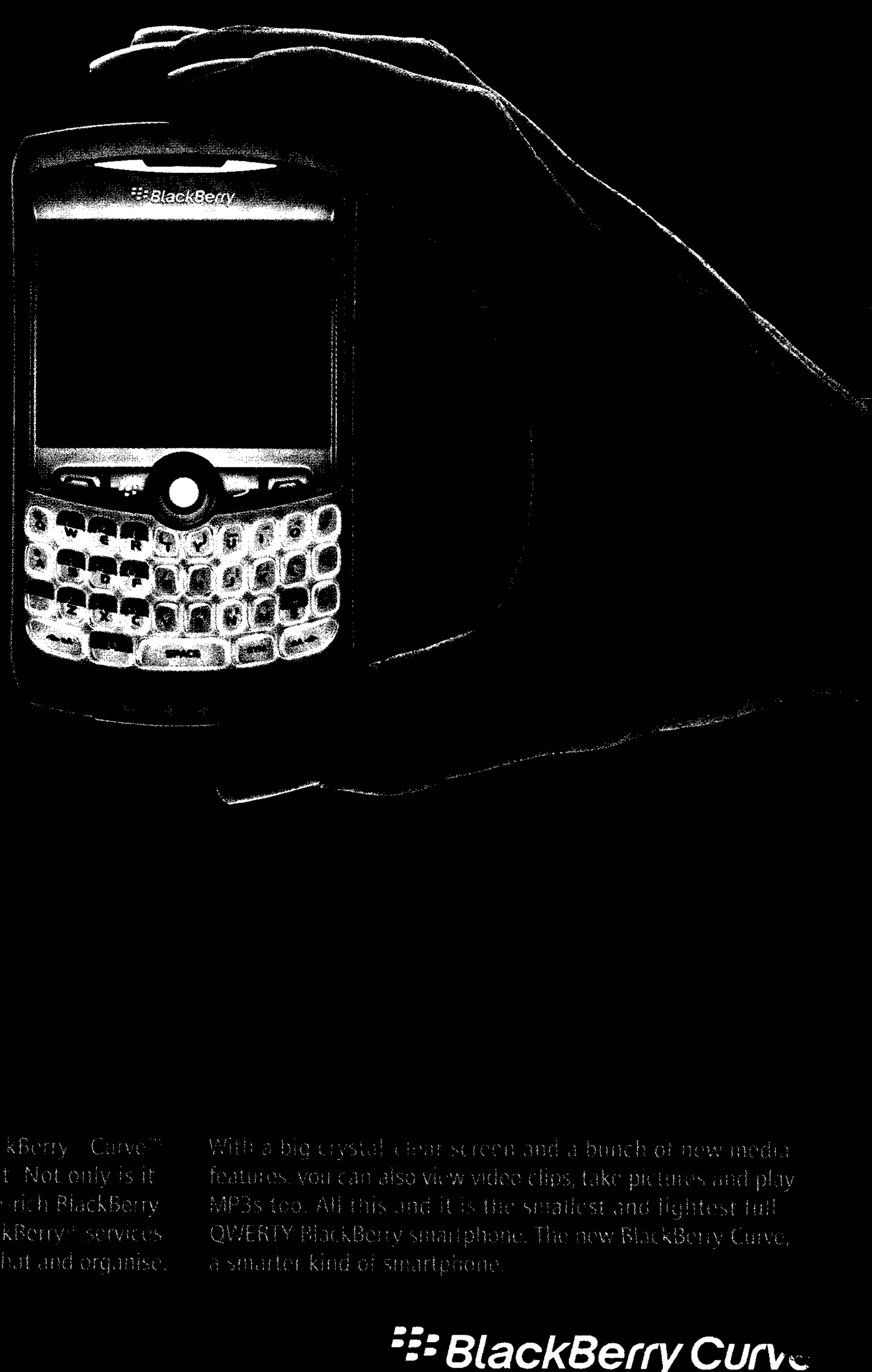
When all around are losing their heads, keep yours.
www.midlife-crisis-retreat.co.uk

Official fuel consumption for the Passat range in mpg (litres/100 km): urban 39.2 (7.2) – 20.0 (14.1); extra urban 60.1 (4.7) – 36.7 (7.7

Passat

combined 50.4 (5.6) – 28.2 (10.0). CO_2 emissions 148 – 238g/km.

THE NEW
ALL BLACKBERRY, ALL SMARTPHONE.
WE DON'T DO COMPROMISE.



No half this, a little bit of that. The new BlackBerry® Curve™ smartphone has everything you could want. Not only is it thin and stylish, but it's also the most feature-rich BlackBerry smartphone yet. You get all the famous BlackBerry® services but you can do much more than email, surf, chat and organise.

With a big crystal clear screen and a bunch of new media features, you can also view video clips, take pictures and play MP3s too. All this and it is the smallest and lightest full QWERTY BlackBerry smartphone. The new BlackBerry Curve, a smarter kind of smartphone.

blackberrycurve.co.uk

BlackBerry Curve

Brownie points

- A Bighead bows out: Hackwatch 7
- Greed is good? Meet Gordon's geckos 8
- Gavel Basher on the Howells of torture 8
- Curious Incident of a Dog on the Towpath 9
- Botch the Builder's homes for votes 9
- Hitchens diary: the brothers grim 26
- Bourn again, prisons and airline safety 28-30

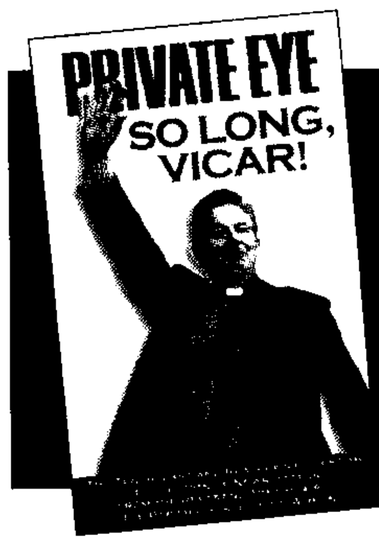
ALTHOUGH Gordon Brown's spinners are hinting at an early general election, there is one big obstacle: the Dirty Digger won't stand for it.

"We would like to see at least a year to 18 months stand-off between Gordon Brown and David Cameron," Murdoch told the *Australian* newspaper last year. His comments were echoed almost word for word by a *Times* leader immediately afterwards: "He [Blair's successor] should resist the urge to call a snap election. The electorate deserves at least a year to decide between him and the man from Notting Hill."

Of course, despite such slavish toeing of the Murdoch line by the *Times*, the Digger maintains he is a hands-off proprietor. No wonder hacks on the *Wall Street Journal* are not reassured by promises that he will run their paper just like the *Times*.

HAVING forced through a below-inflation licence fee agreement earlier this year, Gordon Brown last week added insult to injury by appointing James Purnell as the new minister for culture, media and sport.

Not only is Mr Purnell a former apparatchik of the loathed John Birt, serving under the then director-general in the BBC's corporate affairs department from 1995 until 1997, but his most recent contribution to BBC-government relations was to host the notorious auction last year at which a copy of the Hutton report signed by Cherie Blair was sold to raise funds for the Labour party.



COMING SOON!
The final St Albion Parish News book – So Long, Vicar! Available exclusively from Private Eye. See next issue for full details.

EDITORIAL
6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN.
Tel: 020 7437 4017. Fax: 020 7437 0705.
Email: strobes@private-eye.co.uk
Website: www.private-eye.co.uk

PRIVATE EYE SUBSCRIPTIONS/SALES
PO Box 326, Sittingbourne, Kent ME9 8FA.
Subscription enquiries: 01795 414 871
Overseas: +44 (0) 1795 414 870 Fax: 01795 414 555.
Web: www.subsonline.co.uk
Email: private-eye@servicehelpline.co.uk

SUBSCRIPTION RATES
£28 per annum. Europe and Eire £34. Airmail (rest of world) £38.
Cheques/POs to Private Eye. Mastercard/Visa.

ADVERTISING
Ten Alps Publishing, 9 Savoy Street, London WC2E 7HR.
Email: private-eye@tenalpspublishing.com
Display: 020 7878 2366 **Classified:** 020 7240 9129

Published by Pressdram Ltd, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN. **Printed** by BGP Ltd, Bicester OX6 7QZ. **Distributed** by P.E. Distributions, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN. 020 7437 4017.

ABC

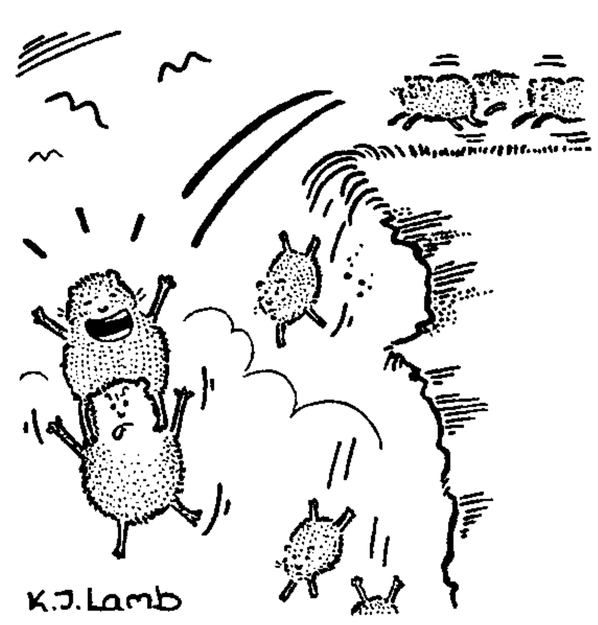
FOR a new prime minister committed to openness and accountability, Gordon Brown remains remarkably evasive about his friend Sir Ronald Cohen.

Asked last week by BBC political editor Nick Robinson whether it was about time he came clean on his confidant's tax status, first questioned in the *Eye* and thought to be "non-domiciled", Brown shifted uneasily in his seat and mumbled "Ronald Cohen is not an adviser to me". Oh no?

Cohen has advised the government on a number of issues in recent years, including competitiveness and technology; and in 2000 Brown asked him to chair his Social Investment Taskforce to advise on using venture capital in deprived areas – though this is no longer publicly funded and therefore has, the Treasury says, no advisory role.

Now Sir Ronald is chairman of the Commission on Unclaimed Assets, itself well plugged into the Treasury. Only a few weeks ago Cohen's official spokesman acknowledged to the *Eye* that Sir Ronald and Brown were "certainly close". But clearly this closeness can't possibly stretch to giving advice.

New Leader



"Whatever we achieve in the future will be because we are standing on your shoulders"

HE MAY be a crusty pin-striped Tory, but floor-crossing Quentin Davies has a good reason to support Gordon Brown.

Since 2000 he has been a director of the building firm Vinci, which benefits from Brown's PFI on schools projects in Staffordshire and Derby, as well as at a number of PFI police stations.

Old Labour objectors may have to bite their tongues when the braying Davies arrives on their benches: his firm makes a number of notable appearances in the Health & Safety Executive's prosecutions database.

In 2004 Vinci was fined £28,000 after Fred Allison was killed in the cab of his street cleaning truck by an unsecured height barrier in a Vinci-operated car park. In 2003 Vinci was fined £17,000 after a piling rig from the Channel Tunnel rail link fell on to a live train track. In 2002, Vinci subsidiary Norwest Holst was fined £5,000 after a sub-contractor fell five metres from improperly secured scaffolding in Preston. The year before, Norwest Holst was fined £27,000 after a badly slung steel reinforcing bar hit a workman on a poorly controlled site on the A6 bypass near Clapham.

AS THE waters rose last week, Whitehall flooding officials wrote to local authorities, water companies and other "urban drainage stakeholders" telling them that, er, "work is now starting in earnest" on a strategic overview for inland flood risk management. Stable doors and bolting horses spring to mind.

While ministers continued to insist on television that cuts in last year's flood defence budget hadn't made the effects of the deluge any worse, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs quietly distributed the letter, along with an "impact assessment on integrated urban drainage".

The document admits that "responsibilities for managing storm water in urban areas are complex, confusing and distressing for the public. The existing arrangements lead to inefficient and piecemeal investment decisions overall that will leave urban areas poorly adapted to cope." Surely not?

WHILE flood victims have shown plenty of jolly British pluck, officials at Amber Valley Borough Council in Derbyshire got into the spirit by charging residents a small fortune for sandbags to keep out the floodwaters.

When homeowners near the River Erewash asked for sandbags, as the river was about to burst its banks, they were told there was a charge of £47 for five.

The council said it had provided free sandbags to homes at the highest risk and claimed the charges were meant to ensure there were enough bags to go around. But surely the way to do that would have been to ration bags on the grounds of need, rather than offering protection to those who could afford it?

Meanwhile in Stroud, residents were given free – but empty – sandbags and told to buy their own sand from builders' merchants. Lovely.

AS LIVE pictures of the burning Jeep Cherokee came in, BBC News 24 anchor Peter Sissons observed: "You don't see this sort of thing very often at Glasgow airport."

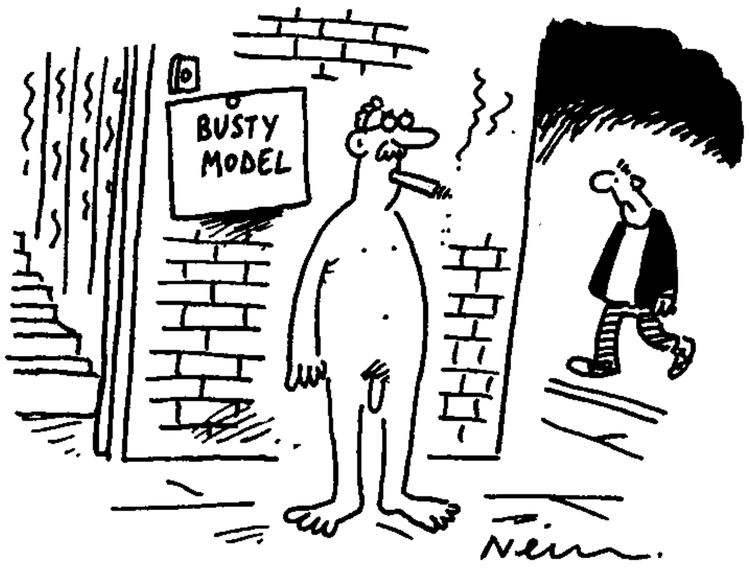
One person who hadn't seen this sort of thing at all was the "eye witness" the BBC then interviewed about the attempted suicide bombing at the airport.

As Sissons was obliged to clarify: "Another eye witness account – he didn't see it with his own eyes but it's interesting nonetheless."

ROLLING NEWS

"Do you think this sounds like a sophisticated device or something quite amateurish?"
– BBC News 24 interview with an explosives expert during last week's bomb scare

"Do you think this sounds like a sophisticated device or something amateur Irish?"
– BBC News 24 subtitles



"Apparently, it's classified as a workplace"

Street Of Shame

"ALLEGATIONS that police plotted to mislead the original inquiry into the Lockerbie bombing, resulting in a wrongful conviction, have been passed to official investigators," *Sunday Times* hack Mark Macaskill reported on 24 June, four days before the Scottish Criminal Cases Review Commission granted Abdelbasset Ali Mohamed al-Megrahi a second appeal against his Lockerbie conviction.

What swayed the commission was the discovery that police had reverse-engineered the evidence to implicate the Libyan after first suspecting a Palestinian called Mohammed Abu Talb. "The development could bring embarrassment for the government," Macaskill noted.

It could also bring a blush to the cheeks of his colleague David Leppard, the *Sunday Times* hack who in 1989 was the first to identify Abu Talb – but then completely changed his spots two years later, promoting the Libya connection in the *ST* and writing a book on it. In 2001, on CNN, he hailed the Scottish court's guilty verdict against the Libyan as "a tremendous triumph, in fact, for the British law enforcement system and particularly for the Scottish police".

Still, Leppard should be used to coping with embarrassment by now. He was also responsible for one of the *ST*'s most costly cock-ups of recent times – the front-page "exclusive" claiming that former Labour leader Michael Foot was a KGB agent!

● *See In the Back, page 28*

SIGHS of relief at Conservative HQ and at Wapping: the Tories' new spinner-in-chief, former *News of the Screws* editor Andy Coulson, may escape being cross-examined on oath about the phone-interception scandal which forced his resignation.

Clive Goodman, the paper's former royal editor, is currently taking his unfair-dismissal complaint through the Dirty Digger's internal appeals procedure, and when that fails he has threatened to issue proceedings and summon Coulson as a witness. But it now seems the company will buy him off.

This follows a private settlement reached last week with Goodman's partner-in-crime, the private investigator and ex-professional footballer Glenn "Trigger" Mulcaire, who received a six-month jail sentence in January for his part in tapping into hundreds of phone messages from the phones of royal aides and celebs. Though not a *Screws* staffer, Trigger had a contract which paid him a six-figure annual retainer for "research". After his release from prison he asked m'learned friends to sue for the premature termination of his contract.

Terrified at the prospect of Mulcaire airing the paper's filthy linen in public, the company has now paid him a sum not far short of £200,000. Goodman can expect a similar settlement soon, in return for promising to keep quiet. So the tantalising question of what Coulson knew about the dodgy duo's methods – and when he knew it – may, alas, never be answered.

A NEWS story from last Thursday's *Times*: "Elderly people who read *The Times* or play chess frequently are significantly less likely to suffer from Alzheimer's disease or other dementia…"

This, it claimed, was the conclusion of a new American study, "the findings of which are reported in the online edition of the journal *Neurology*".

All very gratifying for *Times* readers, but the more alert among them may wonder why their paper alone has the power to ward off Alzheimer's. And why would an American research project – conducted at the University of Chicago, in fact – use a Fleet Street rag to test the effects of "frequent cognitive activity in old age"?

Er, it didn't. *The Times* wasn't mentioned once in the *Neurology* article, which merely found that reading "a newspaper" reduced the risk of Alzheimer's. The rest was pure Wapping embellishment, to terrify elderly readers into believing that if they ever switch allegiance to the *Telegraph* dementia will set in forthwith.

SO, the *Sun* has declared its approval of "Gordon's Young 'Uns", praising every member of the new prime minister's "youthful cabinet"… except one.

"Why the hell has he picked a ferocious anti-American as minister for the UN?" the paper's editorial column demanded, homing in on a junior minister, Mark Malloch-Brown. "Malloch-Brown is entitled to his opinion. But he should not be a member of the British government. His appointment casts a shadow over Mr Brown's new-broom cabinet."

While most publications agreed that he was a relatively blameless herbert, the *Times* was equally outraged. "This self-promoting former deputy UN secretary-general has made some crude public remarks about the US administration along with the slightly unhinged assertion that the UN's failure to act decisively on Darfur is partly the fault of the US and UK for invading Iraq," its leader column huffed.

Could this vitriol be in any way connected to Malloch-Brown's very public complaint in June last year that the UN failed to receive fair coverage because "much of the public discourse that reaches the US heartland has been largely abandoned to its loudest detractors, such as Rush Limbaugh and *Fox News*", which was determined to keep "the UN's role in effect a secret in Middle America"?

Presumably not, for Rupert Murdoch, who just happens to be the proprietor of *Fox News* as well as the *Times* and the *Sun*, has on several occasions given assurances that he never interferes with the editorial lines of his newspapers.

CHURCH bells rang and grown men wept openly when news of the Spice Girls' reunion was confirmed. But nowhere was the relief greater than at the Sun. The Bizarre column has been tying itself in knots over the reunion for more than four years and could at last put readers out of their misery.

In February 2003 it revealed that the girls would be "getting back together in two years' time". Alas, by January 2004 the paper could only promise "a one-off reunion gig" to promote a greatest hits album. By March the following year, even that was off. "A Spice Girls comeback seems unlikely," it said.

But never fear. Two months later the paper was again urging readers to "dust off your Union Flag dresses" for a "one-off ten-year reunion concert next summer…" A week later and the girls were apparently "lined up to make a comeback at Live Aid II… on July 2."

And so on. By February last year Bizarre was announcing that "Geri, Victoria Beckham and Mel B have agreed to a tour in November with at least ten, and possibly 12, dates." Er, or not. The following month the Sun said: "At last some good news on the Spice Girls reunion tour – it's not going to happen."

By June this year the story had changed yet again. "Mel C told Bizarre: 'A reunion will happen when the time is right.' You read it here first!" Yeah, right.

COMMONS Speaker Michael Martin, long the recipient of a bad press, has decided it's time to go on the offensive and has hired Messrs Carter-Fuck to speak on his behalf.

Martin has been criticised recently for falling out with (and sacking) the Commons Serjeant at Arms, Major General Peter Grant Peterkin. Infuriated by suggestions that he got rid of the Serjeant for reasons of class envy, Martin has decided the traditional method of rebutting stories via a press spokesman is no good (even though his department hired PR company Luther Pendragon in the person of ex-top Whitehall press office Mike Grannatt).

One hack who recently asked about Martin's behaviour was rung back within 15 minutes by Guy Martin of Carter-Ruck's "media litigation department" no less, to say that *he* was the Speaker's spokesman.

Who exactly is paying for all these silver-tongued spokesmen, one wonders?

RUPERT MURDOCH has been complaining that internet users are no longer flocking to his MySpace social networking website. Instead, he admits, many have turned to FaceBook.

How fortunate then that Murdoch owns other media outlets which are only too willing to promote his website. "I met a girl on MySpace!" boomed the headline on a recent two-page spread in the *News of the World* about how singer Craig David picked up a girl on the website. In fact, according to the *Screws*, David "was seeing a host of MySpace girls". His lover told the paper: "He would be trawling MySpace while I was in bed with him."

In other words: if you want sex galore, there's only one networking site that delivers the goods. No doubt panting *Screws* readers got the message.

HOW JOURNALISM WORKS

"The first evidence of an end to the 'have-it-all' generation of women emerges today with thousands of nursery places lying empty because mothers are choosing to care for young children themselves."

– Rosemary Bennett, The Times, *30 April.*

"Childcare nurseries must open at weekends and in the evenings to cater for the demands of modern working life, according to a government backed survey of parents."

– Rosemary Bennett, The Times, *14 June.*

"Have you got Mrs Jihad the terror suspect's wife?"

UNDER GORDON THERE'LL BE NO MORE PLAYING GAMES WITH THE PRESS... AND YOU CAN HAVE THAT AS AN EXCLUSIVE
COMMONS LOBBY
GOSH! THANKS!
PRESS
RGJ

THE *Guardian* sniffed a scandal in May when it learned that a feature about Wendi Deng, aka Lady Dirty Digger, had been spiked by *Good Weekend*, the Saturday supplement of the Melbourne *Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald*.

Grauniad media hack Stephen Brook pointed out that the publications are owned by Fairfax – in which Rupert Murdoch acquired a 7.5 percent stake last October. "Many staff at both newspapers believe the piece was pulled in an act of self-censorship."

Roy Greenslade weighed in, noting that the magazine "paid A$30,000 (£12,500) to prize-winning journalist Eric Ellis to write a 10,000-word profile of Ms Deng. Though editors were evidently pleased with the result it was decided not to run it. Will any British editor be calling Ellis today?"

Yes indeed! Stephen Brook solicited a copy of the piece from Ellis and passed it to features editor Kath Viner. She and her deputy, Phil Daoust, were keen to run the profile in the paper's *G2* section in June. It was subbed and legalled, embellished with photos of gorgeous pouting Wendi and her disgusting husband – and then spiked at the eleventh hour.

Murdoch doesn't own shares in the *Guardian*, so why the sudden capitulation? *Grauniad* execs give various reasons, as follows, but none seems very plausible:

Several sources were off the record. That often happens with pieces about Rupert, and other tycoons, but actually more were on than off, including Wendi's closest friends.

Wendi wouldn't be interviewed. Newspapers are forever running features about people who can't or won't give interviews, from Osama bin Laden to the Pope. The *Grauniad*'s bizarre implication is that anyone involved in controversy can place themselves beyond press scrutiny by simply refusing to talk.

She's only a tycoon's wife, not part of the business herself. Not true. She is and has been for many years spearheading News Corp's internet business in China, notably MySpace.

The true reason for the *Guardian*'s sudden cold feet remains a mystery. Luckily, other publications have shown rather more pluck. Ellis's piece appears in the current issue of *The Monthly*, an Australian mag, and was also the cover story last week in *New Century Weekly*, a Chinese news magazine. So it's official: even editors in China are now bolder than those at the *Grauniad*!

The Duchess of Cornwall cracked a bottle of beer – brewed by the sub's crew – on her prow to officially name the 'boat', in Navy jargon, before she was gingerly wheeled out of her shed at the stately speed of one metre per minute.

Daily Mail

HACKWATCH

Mary Ann Sieghart

THE news broke like a thunderclap last Thursday morning. Less than 24 hours after Tony Blair left No 10, Mary Ann Sieghart announced her departure from *The Times*.

That nice Mr Murdoch had offered her redundancy terms she couldn't refuse, so "I've decided to take the money and run". *Times* editor Robert Thomson, bravely choking back his tears, paid tribute to "her admirable energy, intellect and flair".

Never mind the energy and flair: it is, above all, the awesome intellect that *Times* readers will miss most. For, as Sieghart has often reminded us in her column, she is very clever indeed. "Like Adam Spencer, the 13-year-old prodigy who has just passed his A levels and wants to go to Cambridge, I had a somewhat unorthodox school career," she has revealed (15/8/2003). "I took my first O levels at 11 and my first A level at 14."

Even after all these years, there's no sign of decay in those mighty synapses. That, she explained last year (31/3/06), is why she opposes an elected House of Lords: intelligent people such as herself don't "relish knocking on doors in the pouring rain", and if you insist on elections to the upper house you effectively rule out "candidates who would otherwise have much to offer". That's also why she supported Ségolène Royal in the French election: "She would prove that brains can easily be combined with beauty, that you patronise intelligent women at your peril" (8/2/07).

But then Mary Ann has already proved that herself. "Last July I wrote a couple of columns on these pages excoriating Israel for its overreaction to the kidnap by Hezbollah of two of its soldiers," she recalled recently (4/5/07). "Inevitably, I was deluged with emails accusing me of… ignorance. Patronising readers told me that I had no understanding of Israel's position in the Middle East." As if! Now that an official Israeli commission has also criticised the war in Lebanon, she has stern advice for a reader who called her an idiot: "Perhaps he and his ilk could grow up."

If they need guidance on growing up, look no further. "I do wish that middle-class parents would stop trying to maximise their children," Sieghart complained last year (12/10/06). "Our offspring don't have to be Grade 8 violinists or county athletics champions or black-belt karate kids. Why can't they just have fun?… Just as some men look for trophy wives, so some mothers want to turn their offspring into trophy children. A high-achieving child reflects well on them. They can boast about the music grades, the karate belts, the exam results… We do our children far more good if we encourage balance and moderation."

Too modest, surely. For despite her busy professional life Mary Ann has found the time to produce two prodigious daughters, Evie and Rosie, aka Brainella and Intelligencia, who were barely out of nappies when she first paraded them at political press conferences. Their exploits have been a staple of her columns ever since:

"Having seen both my children through seven-year-old tests at a state primary school, I can't understand why teachers make such a song and dance about them. My girls weren't remotely 'stressed' by the experience." (21/5/03.) "Children can be trained from an early age… From the moment that they could utter a few words, we insisted that ours say 'please' or 'thank you' before they were given or allowed to keep anything. For a few years, it was a bore to hammer it in. But, boy, was it worth it. 'What wonderful children!' people say. 'What good manners they have!'" (29/10/03.)

"At home, we insist on our children eating vegetables and fruit every day… And we set them initiative tests. For instance, a couple of years ago, my husband promised them tea at Fortnum's if they could find their own way there by public transport and meet him at an arranged time. They did." (12/11/03.)

"If you do everything for your children, they will never learn to do it for themselves. You should be encouraging them to be independent and, eventually, to do stuff for you. Our daughter made an entire family picnic the other day..." (19/5/05.)

Both girls are, she boasts, "seasoned travellers". At the beginning of last year she took them away for four months' trekking in South America and sailing in the Caribbean. And guess what? "Even after four months away, our children have barely fallen behind their classmates; in some subjects they are ahead. And they have learnt about Mayan civilization, rainforests, volcanoes, sailing, salsa and a smattering of Spanish, as well as backpacking survival techniques." (9/3/06.)

Is there no end to their talents? "At 11, our elder daughter was walking to school and back, a mile each way, every day. And last Friday our younger daughter, now 13, made it from Winchester to Norwich on her own, a journey involving four trains and a crossing of London. All this – we hope – will encourage self-confidence and self-reliance… Both our daughters have been on a self-defence course." (4/5/07.)

And no *Times* reader will ever forget this startling disclosure (14/12/06): "My daughter's school has just run a competition for the best slogan for Science Week. The winning entry is so clever that I thought I should share it with you: 'Physics rules, chemistry rocks, biology grows on you.' To spare her blushes, I am not going to print the name of the author."

So we may never know if it was Brainella or Intelligencia.

To be on the safe side – and help *Times* readers cope with the loss of Mary Ann's weekly wisdom – the paper should give both girls their own columns forthwith. They've already had plenty of practice. "It's not so much working on a Bank Holiday that bothers me," Mary Ann wrote on 21 August 2003. "It's the fact that politics and public life seem so remote when you're in a Bank Holiday frame of mind doing Bank Holidayish things. So I am indebted to my daughter, Evie, for coming up with the idea for this column. 'I know,' she said over breakfast on Monday. 'Why don't you write a column about how politics is just like the dodgems'?" How so? "She pointed out that on the dodgems – as in politics – you know you are there to take the knocks." Brilliant!

ORDER OF THE SARAH BROWN NOSE

"She has been Britain's first lady for just 48 hours but Sarah Brown is already showing she is a class act when it comes to dress sense. As her husband Gordon took over as Labour leader on Sunday, Sarah, 43, watched proudly – dressed in an expensive-looking smart cream suit and matching shoes. The jacket's drawstring waist gently tucked her in, giving her curves in all the right places. The bright red top added a splash of colour to the outfit, suggesting mum-of-two Sarah has a lively sense of fun." – *Daily Mirror*

"Behind every great man is a great woman. As Gordon Brown swept into No10 in an immaculate suit and powder blue silk tie, his wife Sarah was his killer accessory… She is an asset to her husband and will no doubt earn an army of fans across the UK in no time."

– *The Sun*

"Serious about issues, quick-witted with her observations, self-deprecating about herself… In calculated contrast to Cherie Blair, she has opted to be reserved and dignified, to steer clear of the media… Her enthusiasm for her husband's elevation is palpable, but not coarsely triumphalist. And she displays that slight contempt for money and celebrity that is the mark of a truly refined spirit… Just what we need."

– *Christina Odone,* Observer

THRASH GORDON?

THE policy has taken a thrashing from MPs: how long before its biggest promoter, Gordon Brown, also gets a kicking over the private finance initiative?

Shortly before the new prime minister's enthronement, what promised to be a bone-dry public accounts committee (PAC) meeting on "tendering and benchmarking on PFI" turned into a demolition of the new PM's pet policy.

It emerged that PFI projects are taking longer to get signed than ever; and that government departments and local authorities are ill-equipped to take on the private sector lawyers and consultants who get the better of them on deals every time.

When ancillary services, ranging from IT in schools to cleaning in hospitals, come up for review after a few years of a PFI deal, it also emerged that the taxpayer generally gets ripped off. Naturally the PFI companies make sure these lucrative sidelines always get written into the deals. When Labour's Austin Mitchell asked whether a PFI company might say: "We will build the hospital, we also want the catering", Treasury mandarin John Kingman admitted it would. "Monstrous" and "blackmail", said Mitchell. But that's the joy of PFI.

Adding insult to injury, millions have been thrown into trying to improve PFI through bodies such as Partnerships UK (Gordon's privatised PFI taskforce) and its local authority counterpart, 4PS. James Stewart, the former banker now running PUK on £475,000 per year, was unable to answer committee chairman Edward Leigh's accusation that PUK had not achieved what it was set up for. Leigh concluded with a withering verdict: "Given that we are in front of the supposedly brightest minds in the Civil Service we have not found your performance very reassuring… PFI was supposed to be the glad, confident morning of contracting services in the public sector… but it seems there have been enormous wasted opportunities and we the taxpayer are paying the price."

Good job Gordon's only committed, er, a couple of hundred billion more to the scheme over the next 30 years or so.

CALLED TO ORDURE

THE Foreign Office's Middle East minister Kim Howells kept his job in Gordon McBroon's reshuffle – and the White House will surely be delighted by the survival of such a loyal ally. Even on the last day of the Blair regime, Howells was sticking to the line that the US does not fly torture victims in and out of British airfields.

Howells was speaking in a morning debate on "extraordinary rendition", as the alleged torture flights are euphemistically known. He himself had just flown in from unspecified meetings in Washington DC, although his plane journey was no doubt more congenial than those of any terror suspects shuttled from the US to regimes less fussy about slicing prisoners' gonads.

The short debate was organised by soft-spoken but sharp-minded Tory MP Andrew Tyrie, one of the more cerebral libertarians at Westminster. He and Norman Lamb (Lib Dem, N Norfolk) recently visited Capitol Hill to discuss extraordinary rendition with US politicians and officials. They found "wide agreement" that rendition was a counter-productive tactic. Tyrie said that even President Bush and Condoleezza Rice had now confirmed that extraordinary rendition occurred.

"If someone had told me in 1997 that within a few years the US would be arranging the torture of people and imprisoning large numbers of them in an illegal, offshore black hole for years on end, I simply would not have believed them," said Tyrie regretfully. His latter point was a reference to Guantanamo Bay. He added that he had been briefed by a Whitehall official whom he would not name.

Howells started to bridle. "I think I was the first Minister to condemn Guantanamo Bay in the House of Commons," he snapped. Tyrie gently inquired if this had been before or after British law officers had declared Guantanamo to be illegal (in other words, how brave had Howells really been?) Howells, crossly: "I cannot remember."

So much for "joined-up government", murmured Tyrie.

The debate heard horrible descriptions of what has allegedly been done to US detainees via extraordinary rendition. Tyrie repeated a "credible account" of a British man "begging for mercy as his penis is cut with a razor". He also mentioned a CIA operative's remark to the *Washington Post*: "We don't kick the shit out of them. We send them to other countries so they can kick the shit out of them."

Before long Howells was huffing and puffing, indicating dissent when Tyrie said that the British government knew about but failed to stop some renditions. Tony Baldry (Banbury), another Tory who is hardly an anti-American hothead, said rendition was "morally wrong". He invited Howells to condemn it.

Would onetime left-wing firebrand Howells do such a thing? Not at first. Pleading shortage of time (he had 12 minutes) he attacked "myths" about rendition and denied that the government had approved "a policy of facilitating the transfer of individuals through the UK to places where there are substantial grounds to believe they would face a real risk of torture". The important verb here is probably "facilitating". Provided Britain does not have to get involved, can rendition still go on?

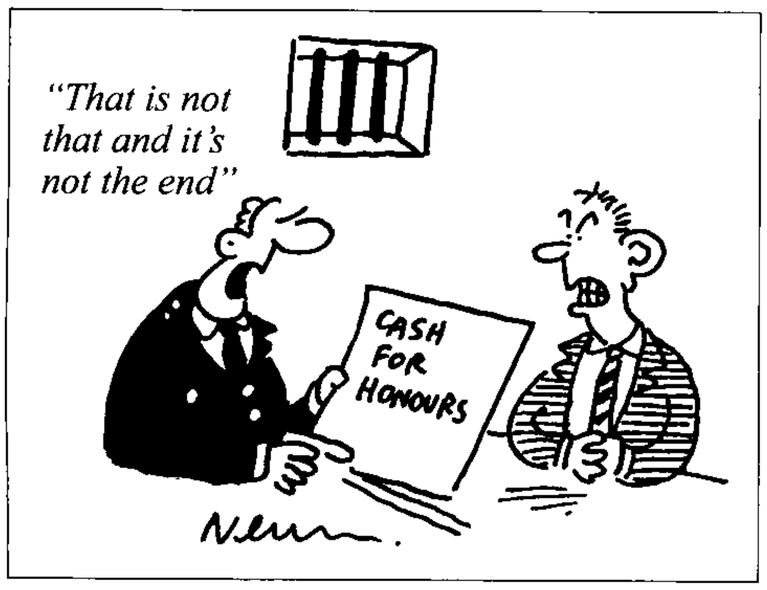
Howells was becoming flustered. At one point he used a verb "rendite" (it's not in our dictionary). He lashed out at a Lib Dem, Richard Younger-Ross, for having "talked too long" – eight minutes, to be precise. The row with Younger-Ross used up plenty more time, as Howells maybe intended.

Tory frontbencher Geoffrey Clifton-Brown asked Howells to "utterly refuse, refute and condemn anything to do with what is commonly known as extraordinary rendition involving torture". Howells did indeed "give that undertaking" but when Tyrie asked if this meant Howells was "condemning the policy that the United States has developed during the past seven or eight years for large numbers of extraordinary renditions", Howells changed tack. "No," he said. "I am not criticising American Government policy." Baffling. Does he condemn rendition or not?

The Lib Dems' Sarah Teather nipped in to ask if Howells believed such activities took place in the US. Howells, by now blustering like mad, said it was disgraceful that "mud was being thrown" at America. It was "irresponsible". He had "never heard a good word about the process of democracy and justice" in the west. "I said that we would not allow the kinds of things that we have heard about from Guantanamo Bay to take place in this country," Howells ranted at Teather. "If the hon lady cannot understand that I feel sorry for her. I was very clear."

Er, no you weren't, Kim. The only thing clear was that you wouldn't utter a word of criticism of America. So much for Gordon Brown's new foreign policy distancing itself from George W!

'Gavel Basher'



JOINED-UP GOVERNMENT

1 July: Gordon Brown announces plans to give up royal prerogatives in order to "give power back to the Commons"

29 June: Gordon Brown rejects elected members of the Commons for five junior ministerial posts, opting instead to give them to high-profile outsiders to whom he will give peerages

THE GORDON HIGH-LIFERS

TONY might have been dazzled by rich businessmen but it has taken Gordon's arrival at No 10 for significant power to be handed to them officially.

The new Business Council, the new PM admits, will "look at, adjudicate upon and inquire into the [business] policies that we are pursuing" – stretching into areas of public interest such as tax, planning and education. So who are the captains of industry in tune with Brown's Britain?

Among the "interesting" appointments are –

Sir Terry Leahy, boss of Tesco – whose idea of the national interest includes avoiding stamp duty on the firm's innumerable land transactions and flying DVDs and other stock in from tax havens to dodge VAT. Tesco also faces pressure from a Competition Commission inquiry into supermarkets while Leahy is under fire from investors for a potential £11m pay package.

Damon Buffini – multi-millionaire head of private equity group Permira, decimator of the AA and job-slasher in chief at Birds Eye – whose idea of the national interest is sending fish finger production to, er, Germany.

Stephen Green – chief executive of HSBC, which recently hit the headlines for accepting only well-heeled customers at a branch in Dorset. Very "inclusive". The bank also recently threatened to leave the UK if the tax burden wasn't eased, even though it doesn't pay all that much.

Jean-Paul Garnier – chief executive of GlaxoSmithKline whose claim to fame was, in 2003, to be the first FTSE 100 boss to have his pay package voted down by investors (you have to very greedy to manage that).

Arun Sarin – chief executive of Vodafone, which has just failed with a spurious claim against the government for multi-billion pound VAT repayments on its 3G licence fee but continues its battle against the Revenue over profits stashed in its Luxembourg tax haven.

Number crunching

£3.8m ■ Amount paid out last year to pensioners by the Financial Assistance Scheme

£3.9m ■ Amount paid out on systems, admin and staffing for Financial Assistance Scheme

TALES OF THE RIVERBANK

HOW BOLD of Gordon Brown to recruit Admiral Sir Alan West, the former first sea lord, as his new "minister for security" – the same Alan West whose cavalier attitude to secret files earned him a severe reprimand from a naval court-martial 21 years ago.

Has Gordon perhaps been reassured that this apparent "security breach" wasn't all it seemed?

In the autumn of 1986 Captain West, as he then was, took 59 pages of classified documents about naval cuts from his office at the MoD without permission "to work on them at home". A couple of days later, while waiting to catch a train from Reading to London, he "decided to exercise a friend's dog to kill time before getting the train" (as you do). He stuffed the papers in his coat pocket because he thought it "safer" than locking them in a briefcase in his car, and off he set along the Thames towpath at Sonning, Berkshire.

Alas! West was so engrossed in dog-walking that he failed to notice the entire sheaf tumbling from his pocket on to the riverbank, where they were found a few minutes later by another walker. By astonishing coincidence, this walker happened to be a freelance hack specialising in defence matters, who promptly wrote a piece for the *Mail on Sunday* revealing the Navy's deep concern about possible cuts in submarines and auxiliary supply vessels! It wasn't until the Monday – the day *after* the *MoS* scoop based on his papers – that West bothered to report their loss to the MoD.

Though he was charged with wrongfully removing secret documents, not taking proper care of them and failing to inform the ministry immediately of their disappearance, West's court-martial was a cosy affair. As we noted at the time (*Eye* 651), naval top brass "found it hard to conceal their grins" while continuing to say it was sheer coincidence that he happened to drop the papers in the path of an oncoming hack. His character-witness at the trial was no less than the deputy chief of the defence staff, Admiral Jeremy Black, who delivered this resonant tribute: "He is a first-class ambassador for the Royal Navy and, indeed, the country. He is a thrusting, operational opportunist…" West's severe reprimand – about the most lenient sentence the court could impose – disappeared from his record after five years, allowing him to resume his upward ascent.

Even so, his new job comes as something of a surprise – not least to our old friends at Qinetiq, the privatised defence firm. Last October they proudly announced West's appointment as chairman of Qinetiq's defence advisory board. After last Friday's announcement from Downing Street, a Qinetiq spokeswoman said she was "unaware" of any plans by Sir Alan to give up the role. We all know Gordon is keen on private-public partnerships, but having a minister of the crown moonlighting for a big corporation would surely be a PPP too far even for him.

BOTCH THE BUILDER

NO ONE knows whether the Brown administration will pull troops out of Iraq, rethink our role in Afghanistan, deal with Europe or rewrite the British constitution. An advantage to Brown, if not the country, of a coronation with no election is that he has had to make no promises to voters or Labour colleagues.

In one area, however, he has been explicit: Brown will build. He will put an end to the days of *Changing Places* presenters hyperventilating about the money to be made from giving the lounge a faux-Moroccan makeover and financial journalists chortling that "your house is earning more than you are". Brown can see what's wrong with baby-boomers becoming paper millionaires simply by sitting in a home and watching its price rise. While their obsession with property distorts the economy, the young must take out extortionate mortgages and the poor must find what rabbit hutches they can.

No longer. Brown is determined to increase the supply of new homes and drive prices down. Yvette Cooper, one of his most devoted allies, is housing minister, and the whole of Whitehall is now echoing with the chant: "Brown the Builder, can he fix it? Brown the Builder, yes he can!"

The first reason for scepticism is that Brown is remedying his own failings. An indolent Labour government dominated by his Treasury presided over and exacerbated the housing shortage. Labour ministers stood by while prices shot up. The Treasury so ruthlessly throttled the flow of funds to councils and housing associations that they now need 23,000 new homes a year to keep pace with demand for low-rent accommodation. A measure of Labour's failure is that in 2001, it enjoyed the dismal distinction of presiding over the building of fewer homes than any government in any year since 1945.

Well, you might retort, the sinner has repented and deserves thanks for recognising his faults. The trouble is that Labour hasn't just been a know-nothing, do-nothing government. It has tried to build homes, truly it has, but the results have been chaotic.

The Olympics "regeneration" plan ought to have been a prime concern for ministers, as it was clearly going to preoccupy the media, opposition politicians and every citizen who wondered whether the state was capable of running a big project.

For a while, it seemed as if the Olympics weren't just going to be a vastly extravagant showcase for British athletes to display their mediocre talents. Ken Livingstone and Tessa Jowell promised that the Games would revive a blighted corner of the East End with 40,000 new homes. The target sounded great until it was cut to 9,000 and the local council warned that the few homes that were built would be in a kind of ghetto cut off from the rest of London.

Further east, John Prescott began the development of Thames Gateway, Labour's most ambitious attempt to build the south east out of its property famine. He promised his Prescopolis would create 120,000 homes and 180,000 jobs, with £6bn of public money, in the de-industrialised badlands where London meets Essex.

How's it going, the public accounts committee asked Peter Housden, permanent secretary at the Department of Local Government and Communities last month.

I haven't a clue, he replied. Under questioning from Edward Leigh, the committee chairman, Housden admitted that he had no idea how many homes had been built. "It's worse than you think," he continued with refreshing candour. "A number of government agencies don't collate key information for the Gateway."

Local MPs were scathing, while the Grimsby Labour MP, Austin Mitchell, looked on with astonishment at the bureaucratic clutter that now clogs the Thames estuary. The government had created Invest Bexley, Woolwich Regeneration, Swale Forward, the Medway Renaissance Partnership and Renaissance Southend, he said. There was no strategic vision, just the usual mess of quangos and taskforces far from democratic control bringing behind them PFI contractors and management consultants out to grab what they could.

In other words, Labour's one attempt at mass home building has been stymied by the same combination of centralisation and privatisation that has led to so much money being wasted on health and education, and has blown the best chance the Labour party has had in its history to improve the public sector.

"You have too many fingers in too many pies and there is an inadequate sense of central direction and drive," concluded Mitchell, and few who heard him disagreed.

Brown the builder, can he fix it? Er, maybe he can't.

'Ratbiter'

A RISIBLE SIR DIGBY?

THE ennoblement of Sir Digby Jones, former CBI boss, and his welcome into the Labour fold as trade minister is the latest twist on a remarkable political journey.

Jones has argued against the minimum wage going above £5, called the unions "increasingly irrelevant" and not long ago claimed that the Tories were more "attuned" to business.

Back in April 2005 at the CBI he described himself as "fiercely apolitical. You see, Blair, Howard and Kennedy don't pay my wages." In the same month, as the general election loomed, he told the *Sunday Telegraph*: "They've wasted our money. This government has not had the courage to reform public services."

By November, with Labour returned to power, there was no let up in his criticism. "There is enormous anger at the craven surrender on pensions. It is easy to negotiate when you say: 'I give in.' The government has given in to its trade union paymasters. What saddens me is that a government which has prided itself on delivering a stable economy has just mortgaged the country's future for £750bn."

Undaunted, he now seems excited about working for the very government that so saddened him. Of his new role he says: "I look forward to banging the drum for British business of all sectors and all sizes all over the world." What a difference a junior ministerial post can make!

CARBON COP-OUT

WHAT exactly was David Miliband being rewarded for when he was promoted from his environment post to Foreign Secretary?

Whatever else it may be, it certainly wasn't services to the environment. Under Labour, CO_2 emissions have risen and are currently running at 4.4 percent higher than when they came to power.

Perhaps an even bitterer pill for Labour greenies is the fact that the Tories managed to cut emissions without even trying. In the 80s and 90s, CO_2 emissions fell because of the so-called "dash for gas", where power generators moved to cleaner gas-fired rather than coal-fired generation in order to take advantage of cheap North Sea gas.

Labour actually promised in 1997 to help the struggling coal industry – and mollify trade unions – by stemming the "dash for gas". Blair assured the Commons that: "We want to preserve as much of the deep-mined coal industry as we possibly can."

But while coal still supplies almost 40 percent of our electricity, plans to help the domestic industry have evidently gone adrift. Three quarters of the coal burnt in British power stations comes from Eastern Europe – hardly a good thing either for Britain, which still has plentiful supplies of coal, or the environment.

CAMERON CHRISTENING SHOCK

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

IS THE new EU treaty important enough to justify a referendum, as the abandoned constitution would have done?

Not according to Richard Corbett MEP, who wrote two identical letters to the *Independent* and the *Guardian* last week insisting the treaty's "pragmatic reforms... do not require a referendum". Britain has never had a referendum to ratify an international treaty, wrote Corbett, Labour's EU spokesman on constitutional affairs, and "it is nonsensical to demand one that does modest things like changing the length of the EC presidency from six months to 30 months".

Does Corbett really think the new treaty is so innocuous? On the very same day he was to be heard speaking in the European parliament in praise of Germany's chancellor Angela Merkel, whom he credited with "salvaging the bulk" of the EU constitutional treaty. Shome mishtake, surely?

DOES anyone in the European Union take the fight against corruption seriously?

Justice commissioner Franco Frattini has come in for a hammering over failure to crack down on Bulgaria and Romania for going easy on crime and corruption. The countries were allowed into the EU in January despite not having met conditions to overhaul their justice systems. They were told that failure to clean up would be met by sanctions. However, MEP Elmar Brock, former rapporteur for enlargement, said that after six months the commission had only succeeded in "talking, and not in acting".

In fact Frattini has not only watered down a report by commission officials on the matter, but also dropped the option of sanctions. There is now little to stop EU funding, currently flowing into state coffers of the new Balkan EU member nations, from leaking out again into the hands of shady politicians and Mafioso cronies.

PS: When Frattini upbraided EU member states last month for missing the 2005 deadline to criminalise all aspects of private sector bribery, he praised just two countries for bringing their legal codes into line: Belgium and, er, the United Kingdom. *Whoops!* His announcement came just two weeks after publication of detailed allegations about BAE Systems' Al-Yamamah kickbacks to the Saudi royal family. It seems that even when member states do enact anti-corruption laws, they are unlikely to apply them.

He's discredited and unelectable in his own country

THE European aviation industry, already feeling the regulatory heat over climate change, is about to receive what amounts to a £540m bung from the European Commission.

Aviation, which the commission wants to include in its Emissions Trading Scheme from 2011, will benefit from a so-called "Clean Sky" subsidy to research and develop planes that are cleaner and greener – despite the "polluter pays" principle enshrined by EU treaty.

Moreover, a number of companies prominent in the initiative are better known for military, rather than civil, aviation. These include French favourites Dassault (whose revenues come from defence and executive jets) and Thales, as well as Sweden's Saab, 80 percent of whose revenue is from defence. Bizarrely, considering this is EU money, another beneficiary will be Israel Aerospace Industries Limited, which among other things maintains Israeli Air Force jets.

While the commission is banned from funding military projects directly, a spokesperson admits that any new intellectual property created with the help of EU funds will remain with the company and there is nothing to stop it being transferred to military use. So long as any spin-offs are "applicable to civilian aircraft", the fruit of the research "is for the companies to deal with as they wish".

DON'T CARE HOMES

HATS OFF to Sally Morgan, the former minister for women and Blair aide who last year joined the board of Southern Cross, the company behind a landmark judgement denying human rights protection to the sick and elderly.

In a test case in June, Southern Cross clashed with campaigners trying to stop it evicting an 84-year-old woman with Alzheimer's. Human Rights legislation offered some hope as eviction would interfere with her right to a stable home life. But the act only applies to old people housed in council-run care homes: those given publicly-funded care in private institutions have no such protection.

So embarrassing is this oversight that Lord Falconer stepped up to back campaigners pressing the law lords to extend Human Rights protection to those in private care. It was argued that because the companies are paid from public funds, they are, in effect, acting for the state and should be covered by the act.

Alas, m'learned friends did not agree, and Southern Cross won its case – establishing in black and white that privatisation of care strips protection from the vulnerable. Indeed, prisoners are now better protected by the law than pensioners in privately run homes.

PS: This is not Morgan's only jarring association. Twas she who organised the committee advising Tony Blair on his career options after leaving government, and presumably found that starting a war in Iraq made him an ideal peace envoy to the Middle East!

NEWS FROM THE SANDPIT

THANKS to the internet, we hear a lot more about what is happening back in Blighty than the chain of command appreciates.

The latest chatter here in Basra is about a lad called Stephen Menary, who lost his sight, his left arm and the hearing in one ear when, as a 14-year-old cadet, he opened an IRA letter bomb, posted to his Territorial Army barracks.

We hear that the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority has decided to cut the amount of money due to him by £150,000 because he has now learned to cook for himself and do his own washing.

Current and past members of the forces are lobbying to have this decision changed, encouraged by the case of Tul Bahadur Pun, the 84-year-old Gurkha and VC holder who was refused entry to Britain for medical treatment – a decision subsequently overturned after loud campaigning.

Yes, for those of us serving in the sandpit, the internet has empowered us in an entirely new way. We can get our voices heard and we use the press as much as it has always used us. Perhaps that's why the Septics (septic tank: yank) and the MoD are discussing ways of banning our access to it.

'Squarebasher'

Down on the Farm

A MURKY drama unfolded recently in a Shrewsbury courtroom reminding us yet again of the unhealthy closeness between the officials of Defra and the pharmaceutical industry.

John Rawlings is an agricultural merchant who supplies some 70 farms in the Midlands with pesticides (don't worry if you have a bias against pesticides: that's not the point of the story). Mr Rawlings noticed to his surprise that many of the pesticides he was selling were available much more cheaply on the continent, even though they were the same products made by the same companies. Aware that we now live in the "single market", Mr Rawlings imported 14 products from Italy and Holland – products which would have cost up to 45 percent more in Britain. He and his customers were happy. But Defra wasn't and duly hauled him into court to face 14 criminal charges. His offence, apparently, was that these chemicals had not been vetted by the Pesticides Safety Directorate (PSD), part of Defra's empire, and were therefore illegal, even though all but one were exactly the same as products the PSD had already approved. Defra, it seemed, had not yet heard about the single market. This is odd, since almost all it does is dictated by Brussels, for which it is merely a very inefficient branch office.

What Defra hadn't reckoned on, however, was His Honour Judge Onions who, as the costly trial unfolded, waxed ever more irritable. At one point he was so angry at Defra's "prevarication" he threatened that, unless it got its act together and withdrew 11 of the 14 charges, he would order a senior Defra minister to appear in his court by 10am the next morning to explain what the officials were up to.

At the end of the case Judge Onions said it was clear Defra was collaborating with the "chemical companies to operate a cartel" (which two of the companies' witnesses had admitted under oath). In other words, Defra was conniving with its friends in the pharmaceutical industry to sting British farmers up to 45 percent more for their products than was being charged to farmers on the continent. He was so angry he said he would be writing to Mr Kerr Wilson, head of the PSD, asking why the case had been brought and demanding an answer within 21 days. He also said the pharmaceutical companies should be investigated by the Competition Commission, since operating cartels is an offence under EU law.

On the three remaining charges, the judge gave Mr Rawlings a conditional discharge on the grounds that technical offences had been committed. But in light of Defra's behaviour, he ordered the ministry to pay 80 percent of its costs. True to form, when Defra and the PSD reported the case on their websites, they left out anything remotely detrimental to their case, including the fact that the taxpayers were being left to foot most of Defra's £42,500 bill. They presented it as if they had won a glorious victory and reminded farmers that it was a criminal offence to use pesticides not approved by the PSD, for which they could lose their EU subsidies.

The chances of Defra doing anything to end the illegal cartel seem remote. After all, it's not long since Defra helped cover up the disaster inflicted on thousands of sheep farmers by their use of OP sheep dips, all manufactured by its pharmaceutical chums.

'Muckspreader'

"Remember the good old days, when people lived lives of quiet desperation?"

SIGNAL FAILURES

NEGative outcomes

RICHARD BOWKER, chief executive of National Express Group, is delivering the same value for money in his latest post as he did when he headed the short-lived Strategic Rail Authority.

In 2006 NEG paid him £359,000 – not his annual remuneration, but his reward for less than four months' work after taking up his post on 12 September. But he's worth every penny of his salary and performance-related bonus because of his inside knowledge of the esoteric process of assessing bids for rail franchises.

That process has left many a firm disappointed, confused and angry. FirstGroup, for example, was furious when Bowker's SRA refused to shortlist it for the Great Eastern business in 2003, despite First Great Eastern's relatively good record.

When NEG appointed Bowker it badly needed to win new franchises, having been banished from railways in Scotland, Wales and the South West and lost its status as holder of the most rail franchises. Fortunately NEG was in pole position to win the new East Midlands franchise and the "London overground" rail concession, because it had unrivalled insider knowledge as the incumbent franchisee in both areas for the past decade.

Alas, Laing and Hong Kong-based MTR will relieve NEG of Silverlink on the north London line. And now the transport department's rail section (headed by former FirstGroup high-flier Mike Mitchell) has awarded the East Midlands franchise (Midland Mainline and part of Central Trains) to… Stagecoach.

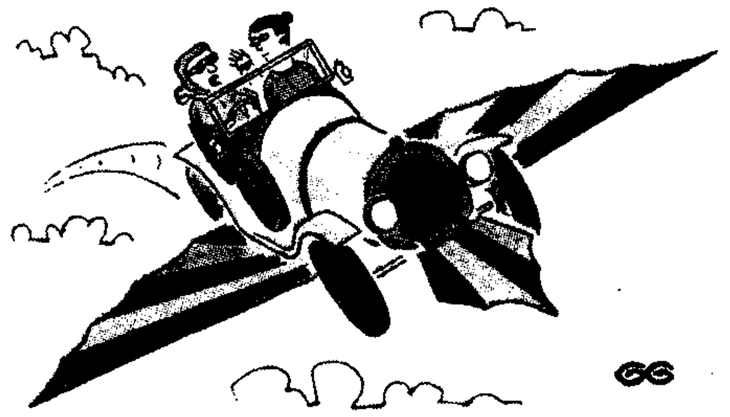
Bowker said he was very disappointed to lose East Midlands and looked forward to the transport department "explaining the reasons for their decision". It's interesting that he expects the department to explain why his firm lost: when he led the SRA, he refused to divulge details of how bids were assessed because he didn't want companies to know what the SRA was looking for. "It is a commercially sensitive matter… because it is extremely important that bidders do not gain the system," he said in 2003.

THE public cost of Labour's privatisation dogma is highlighted by the trouble at Metronet, the ailing consortium trying to upgrade London underground tracks.

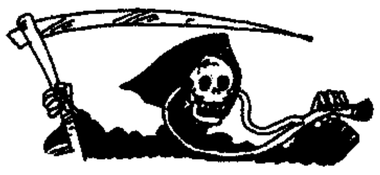
Last week two consortium members, WS Atkins and Balfour Beatty, devalued their stakes in Metronet to nil and warned shareholders they were writing off £221m between them. Metronet's big problem is that since the Tube public-private partnerships were pushed through by Labour, responsibility for them has passed from Whitehall to Transport for London – where Ken Livingstone has consistently opposed Tube privatisation. TfL has refused any bailout and Metronet's best remaining hope is that the Tube arbiter will find some excuse to let it off the hook.

How much greener the grass must look over the fence that separates Tube tracks from the national rail network, where huge wads have been dished out in bailouts to private firms which got their sums wrong (*Eyes passim*). The bailouts were justified because the private sector had to be kept interested and enthusiastic: a rail system that isn't privatised and focused on profit is anathema to "new" Labour. But Livingstone wouldn't shed a tear if Metronet collapsed, and for once shareholders are paying for company failings.

'Dr B Ching'



"No more worrying about speed cameras!"



MEDICINEBALLS

Wasting away

SO. FAREWELL then Patricia "a penny wasted in the NHS is a penny stolen from a patient" Hewitt.

In her final week, the DoH – the second most dysfunctional department after the Home Office, according to a Cabinet Office review – pulled the plug on a £35m independent sector treatment centre for south London, leaving taxpayers liable for several million in compensation. All four neighbouring acute NHS trusts are heavily in debt and desperate for the work, so it seems the ISTC is no longer necessary.

A more radical solution might have been to work with existing NHS hospitals to increase their capacity rather than set up expensive private competition that was never going to be viable in the long term.

The waste of unnecessary competition is further highlighted by the closure of a first wave ISTC at Ravenscourt Park Hospital, part of Hammersmith Hospitals trust in west London. The centre was set up to cut orthopaedic waiting lists in 2002 but has long since run out of patients and has been costing the trust £4.5m a year in running costs.

Meanwhile, the pennies have been piling up for Sue Osborn and Susan Williams, former joint chief executives of the National Patient Safety Agency, who were paid £138,610 while on indefinite leave from July 2006 to March 2007, pending an inquiry into their managerial record.

Their interim replacement has cost at least £78,419. The pair have since cost the taxpayer a further half a million pounds in early retirement pay.

Hospital cornered

THE most radical NHS privatisation to date – putting a private company in charge of an entire hospital, emergency services and all – is currently stalling at a cost to taxpayers of around half a million pounds.

A deal under the ISTC programme hands Lymington Hospital to the Partnership Health Group, putting the company in charge of everything from routine care and medical admissions to emergencies and intensive care.

Alas, instead of taking over this month as planned, the deal has been delayed "until the autumn" – especially costly as the hospital has been open since January but can't recruit full-time staff until the new company takes over.

An under-strength team of NHS nurses is now struggling to keep the hospital ticking over at 60 percent occupancy. The trust has spent £468,000 so far on agency staff and will continue like this until Partnership Health gets its act together.

Naturally, the cost of the delay in terms of agency fees and staff morale will not form part of any calculation as to the benefits of the privatisation.

Safety belter

IF THE National Patient Safety Agency were doing its job properly, it would be able to advise hospitals on the safety implications of not having enough sufficiently experienced junior doctors in the wake of the MTAS scandal (*Eyes passim*).

The risk to patients is most acute in high tech specialties such as paediatrics where senior house officers with up to four years' experience and hoping to be career paediatricians could be replaced with trainees with a year or two's experience just passing through for four months without any great interest in the specialty.

Changing junior staff around on 1 August, when many senior staff are on holiday, has always been a potential disaster (hence "the killing season"), but this year could break all records. Consultants at the United Bristol Hospital Trust have been warned they may have to cancel their leave, and those at Leeds Teaching Hospital Trust have been urged to "minimise the risk to patients" by "preparing for gaps in the rotas".

Those junior doctors lucky enough to get a job may be in no fit state to do it, however. Doctors' mental health is not great at the best of times, but a survey of nearly 1,000 juniors going through MTAS by Dr Gregory Lydall has found they are even more stressed, anxious, depressed and suicidal than normal, disliking their jobs and drinking more heavily. It would be hard to construct a job application system more likely than MTAS to destroy an applicant's mental health and create huge stresses for the interview panel. If Gordon Brown wants to save the NHS, he should start by improving the mental health of the staff. No one can manage a workforce of a million and a quarter from Whitehall. At least give senior doctors back the power to select the best juniors for the job.

M.D.

Running to standstill

HOW curious that the Mid Essex Hospitals Trust can claim to have met all its NHS targets while consultants complain that the axing of support and secretarial staff is causing delays to test results, referrals and treatment.

A "turnaround team" sent to Broomfield Hospital to make £14m savings managed to paralyse the hospital by pooling doctors' secretaries in January. Records and notes went unfiled, and letters and reports were left waiting to be typed up and passed to GPs or patients, leading to delays in treatment.

Little seems to have changed. Patients lucky enough to make appointments are still arriving without clinical notes and others coming for surgery find there aren't the necessary operating instruments, because that too was arranged by consultants' secretaries.

On 14 June consultants complained to senior managers that attempts to solve the problems had been disappointingly slow. The response of the £1,500-a-day turnaround chief, Frank Banks, was to complain: "It appears that in addition to the darkness each evening (a reference to problems with a new IT system), I am now responsible for the secretarial situation currently prevailing."

One astonished consultant reminded Banks that he had made the changes against the advice of several medics, and had dismissed their concerns as "shroud waving". Another wrote to him: "I am astonished that you accept no responsibility for the secretarial crisis that has so adversely affected patient care… I think an apology to our patients, GPs and consultant staff might be more appropriate. In a situation where patients are having to wait weeks longer for their results and referrals, the flippant tone of your reply was particularly inappropriate and unprofessional."

It must be little consolation to hospital staff that, having completed his "turnaround" at the hospital, Banks is taking his skills elsewhere.

"Congratulations, it's a midwife!"

FYE TV

News Special: The Prime Minister Resigns (All Channels)

Concert for Diana (BBC1)

THE lives of Tony Blair and Diana Spencer have always been linked because one of his first prime ministerial tasks, in that topsy-turvy year of 1997, was to hammily deliver a lesson at her funeral. And so it came to pass that, spookily, a decade later, Blair left British television just a few days before Diana returned to it.

On Wednesday, the schedules were suddenly filled with programmes with titles along the lines of **News Special: The Prime Minister Resigns**, while, on Sunday, the BBC handed over its main network more or less entirely to **Concert for Diana**, Will and Harry's sort-of Live Aid for their dead mum's 46th birthday.

Fittingly, these parallel extravaganzas for the news alumni of 1997 were both overtaken by a galloping outbreak of Dianarism: the disease of sentimentalism which leads editors and reporters to believe that, in abandoning any of the instincts of journalism, they are "reflecting the mood of the nation" rather than that of a few teary, *parti-pris* creepers.

You don't need to be a professor of journalism to see that the questions by which such coverage should be judged are these: Would a young or uninformed person tuning in understand why Tony Blair was having to leave office earlier than he wanted, after only two years of the five to which he was elected? Would they, if they had not been alive or cognisant in 1997, comprehend the nature of the life, work, death and many social and constitutional controversies involving Diana?

Sadly, the answer to both these questions is a clattering negative, for the simple reason that the Blair programming got caught up in the mood being choreographed by Downing Street, while the concert coverage was dictated by Diana's relatives and then uncritically transmitted.

So, during the Blair specials, Huw Edwards stood fluting outside Number 10 about "this remarkable day" and "these extraordinary scenes" in a worrying echo of the broadcast euphoria which met Blair's entry into Number 10 in 1997. God knows there are probably too many old bores on Britain's newspapers, but at least they were able to compare Blair's final PMQs with Thatcher's and drone on about what Erskine-May has to say about the propriety of standing ovations. On television, there was no historical context at all, and the general impression was given that it was all a jolly good thing.

Five days later, it was the same thing again: Diana presented at the estimation of her most uncritical supporters, and lengthy interviews with the suffering who had experienced that "special smile" or "feeling that she really cared at a personal level". Extracts from her private letters to victims were massively expanded and transmitted. Childhood cine film provided by her brother, Earl Spencer, was played out to the late Freddie Mercury singing "Those Were The Days of Our Lives". The Vatican doesn't do hagiography better than this.

Even more unfortunate was that, as well as being editorially disgraceful, both events were technically dodgy. Broadcasters don't, of course, control the timetable of public events, but they need to be sure of what they will do if the clock starts going wrong. Because Blair left Number 10 a quarter of an hour later than scheduled and Brown stayed for more than three times the slot he had been allotted with the Queen, BBC2 notoriously cut from Blair's final questions to a trailer for a drama series and there were horrible longueurs which Huw Edwards had to fill with increasing desperation.

At the weekend, when Sir Elton was delayed getting back on stage, Jamie Theakston and Fearne Cotton had the same problem, although they loaded most of it on to Ricky Gervais who, poor sod, was forced to deliver a capella on stage in front of hundreds of millions around the world a David Bowie composition from a TV show, *Extras*, which was seen by maybe three million people on BBC2.

But what made these Dianarist programmes even more excruciating was that they were divided by a series of other **News Specials**, covering the car-bombs in London and Glasgow, which, though prone to that self-importance in the reporting which seems to be obligatory these days, did at least manage an occasional connection with facts and analysis.

Elsewhere, in the Blair departure and Diana concert coverage, a Martian or outsider tuning in could only have concluded that the main broadcaster was run, edited and censored by the government and the heirs to the throne. The torrential, uncritical lachrymosity of both runs of coverage made a mockery of the hundreds of impartiality guidelines and editorial committees supposedly in force in British broadcasting.

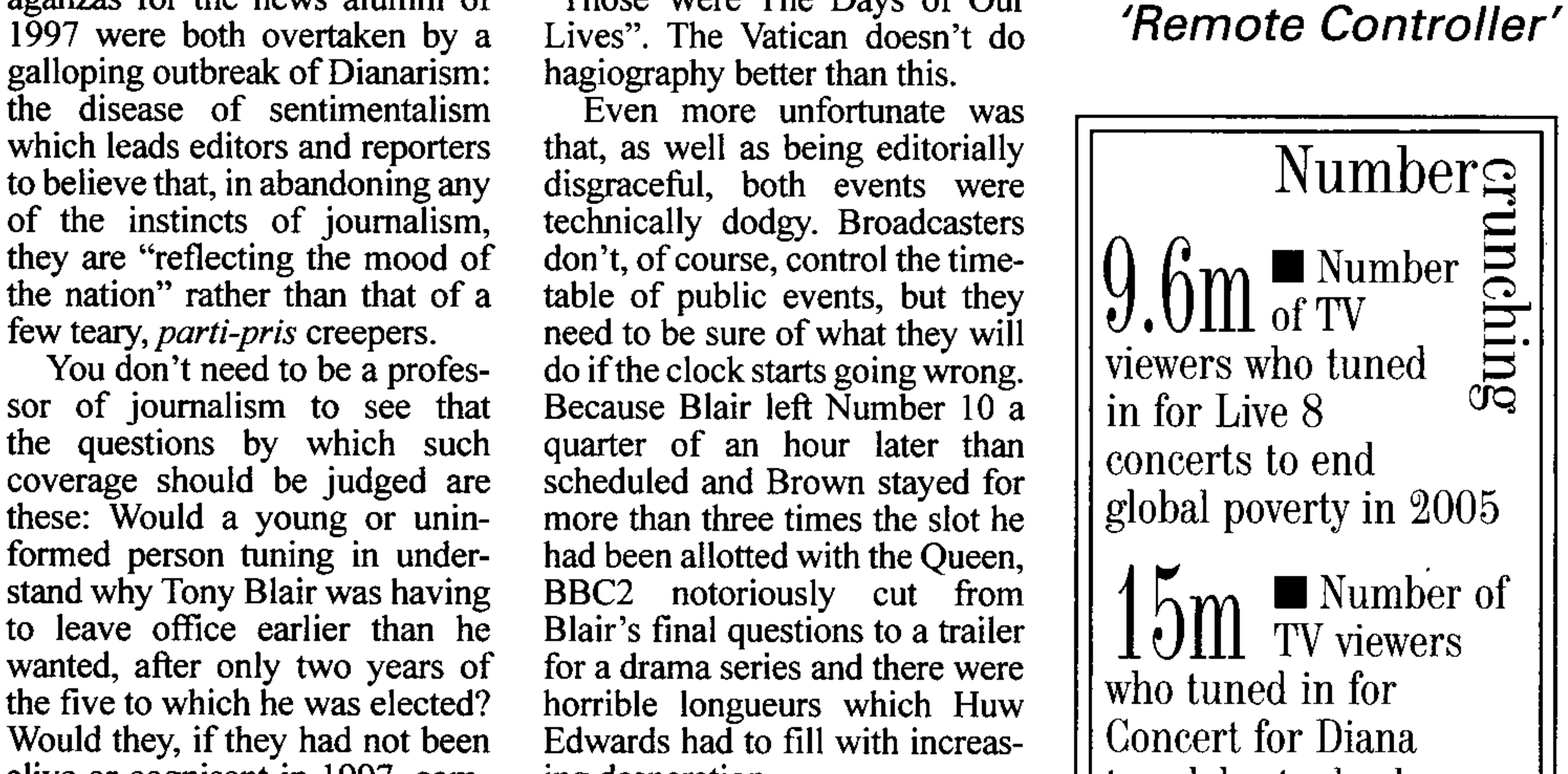
Ominously, this weekend, the big television event is Al Bore's save-the-planet gigs. Let's hope the ghost of Diana doesn't hijack it and that smug pop millionaires are not allowed to fly in and out on their private jets without being asked a few tough questions.

'Remote Controller'

Number crunching

9.6m ■ Number of TV viewers who tuned in for Live 8 concerts to end global poverty in 2005

15m ■ Number of TV viewers who tuned in for Concert for Diana to celebrate dead princess's birthday last weekend



GOING LIVE

RESIGNATION DAY SPECIAL

Least exciting aerial footage

"There we see the scene there at Buckingham Palace. An awful lot still to come today."

– Jon Sopel introduces live helicopter footage of the royal residence, a good three hours before Tony Blair is due to arrive there and tender his resignation, News 24

Most useful expert analysis

"What lies in store for this man? Well, who can say."

– Nicholas Witchell, BBC News

Hyperbole of the Day

"Extraordinary. Gob-smackingly spine-chillingly hair-raisingly extraordinary."

– Nick Robinson on Cherie Blair's parting words to the media, BBC

Worst metaphor

"Already, the reins of power are starting to shift."

– Nicholas Witchell, BBC News

AD NAUSEAM

DELIGHTED by its appointment as "the official suncare supplier to the championships, Wimbledon", Garnier took out double-page adverts in the national papers for the duration of the tournament to promote its Ambre Solaire sunscreen.

"There's no roof at Centre Court this year, and even half an hour of unprotected exposure to the sun can do you harm," the ads noted.

The campaign launched on the day that a month's rain fell in one day across Britain, flooding large areas of Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and the Midlands and killing three people.

DUMB BRITAIN

The Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: Which famous Englishman gave his name to both the water displacement level on a ship and a type of footwear worn in a gym?

Contestant: Flip-flop.

BBC Radio WM

Les Ross: In the British army, which rank is next highest after Captain?

Caller: Admiral.

Steve Wright's Big Quiz, Radio 2

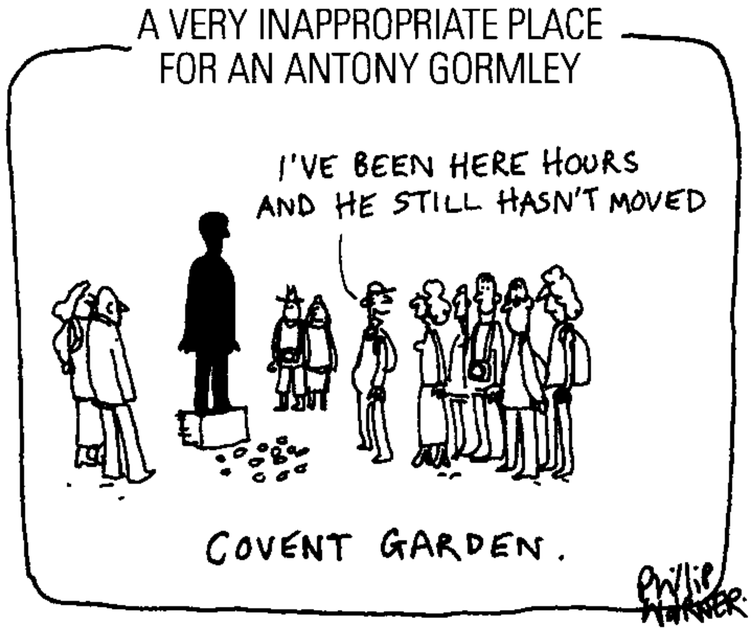
Wright: What was the name of the lioness depicted in Joy Adamson's book Born Free?

Caller: Clarence.

The Ugly Phil Breakfast Show, Kerrang! Radio

Rachel *(producer)*: Name Prince Charles's younger sister.

Caller: Is it Camelia?


A VERY INAPPROPRIATE PLACE FOR AN ANTONY GORMLEY
I'VE BEEN HERE HOURS AND HE STILL HASN'T MOVED
COVENT GARDEN.
Phillip Hunter

MEDIA NEWS

WHEN the BBC "outsourced" its technology wing to Siemens in 2004 in a whopping £2bn contract, the board of governors was assured by the senior managers who brokered the deal that it would save more than £35m a year over ten years.

Governors were reassured that Siemens had "the best commitment to invest in the services required" and had "the scale, resource and funding levels to fit with the BBC's technology vision".

Now the House of Commons public accounts committee (PAC) has "noted" that savings have been significantly less, adding that "60 percent of the key technology projects commissioned directly from Siemens… suffered delays or went over budget".

Curiously that £2bn contract is identical in size to the £2bn "black hole" that director-general Mark Thompson has identified in the BBC's finances. Treble redundancies all round.

WITH much of Sheffield knee-deep in water, a state of emergency in Hull and a reservoir in Yorkshire threatening to burst its banks, Kay "the entire eastern seaboard of the United States has been decimated in a terrorist attack" Burley could be relied upon to keep things in proportion for *Sky News* viewers.

Much to the frustration of studio colleagues, who had been running a sweepstake, it was a full hour and nine minutes on her show of 26 June before she compared scenes of a damp Rotherham (no one killed) to New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina (1,836 dead).

WHAT makes a scoop? For eager hacks at Radio 4 the answer is, it seems, practically everything.

In the latest example, a Radio 4 news bulletin once again told listeners that "the BBC has learned" that Gordon Brown might try to reduce the power of trade union votes when it comes to formulating Labour party policy.

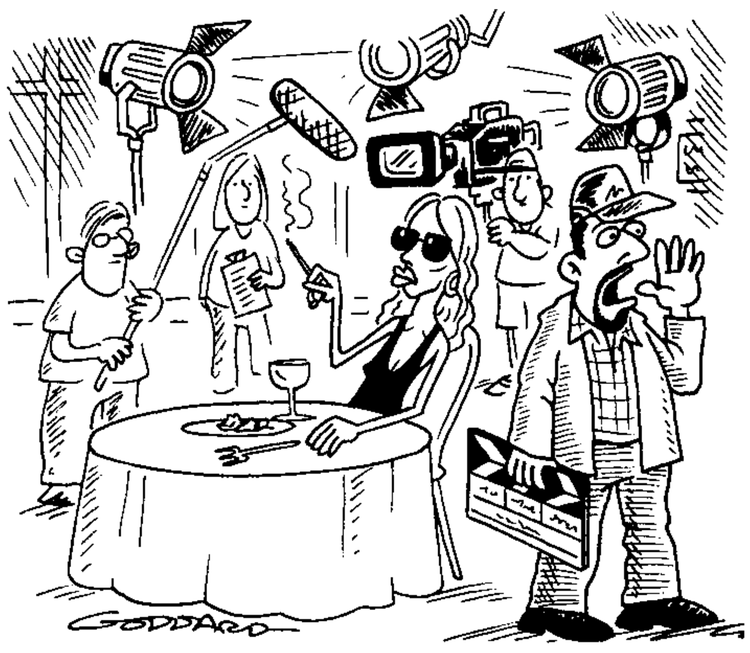
You don't say! Brown had in fact announced this the previous day in his speech to Labour's special conference in Manchester. "The BBC has learned"? Everyone else knew already!

SIMON FANSHAWE, who presented the opening programme of BBC1's new *Building Britain* series two weeks ago, was lavish in his praise for three new skyscrapers that will be erected in Brighton.

One of them was the controversial 40-storey tower that will be the centrepiece of the marina development. His gushing praise was only matched by his derision for fuddy-duddy conservationists who want to preserve the views from all those outdated Regency terraces.

The programme was a public relations coup for Brunswick Developments, the company behind the new marina development. And Brunswick's PR firm, Midnight Communications, will be equally pleased. As indeed will the man who chairs Midnight Communications… Simon Fanshawe!

Why neither he nor the BBC saw fit to mention this vested interest is something the corporation's trustees might wish to pursue.



"OK, we need the body double for the eating scene"

ALL last week *Guardian* readers were treated to "1000 Films to See Before You Die", billed as "a unique part-work on the world's best movies".

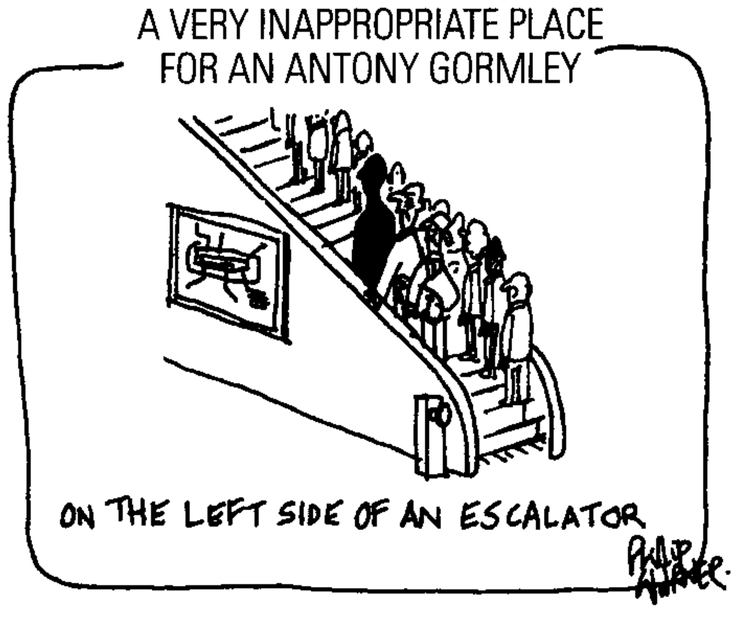
Unique indeed, and not to be confused with last year's Channel 4 programme *50 Films To See Before You Die*; nor with Steven Jay Schneider's book *1001 Movies You Must See Before You Die*. One thousand isn't 50 or 1001, is it? True, last year *Time Out* published *1,000 Films to Change Your Life* – but that's a different category altogether.

What will the *Grauniad* plagiarise for its next unique part-work? *1001 Golf Holes You Must Play Before You Die*… [That's enough lazy lists. Ed]

JUST FANCY THAT!

"I am the only person going out on a limb to bring this forward."

– Heather Mills McCartney on fighting the harassment of celebs by photographers, Evening Standard, *21 June.*



SCREEN GRABS

"THE BFI is underfunded. That is the real issue," the director and British Film Institute governor Stephen Frears said last week, as the BFI begged for a doubling of its annual funding. "More importantly the archive is underfunded. That's to do with films decaying and that's a really serious problem."

The archive is indeed in trouble (see *Eye* 1135). A mountain of old film needs copying and conserving before it crumbles to dust, not helped by the cutting of a third of the technicians' jobs at the conservation centre in Berkhampsted in 2005.

However, bosses at the BFI haven't let a shortage of funds hold up creation of the swanky "BFI Southbank" revamp of the National Film Theatre and the new "Mediatheque", which both opened in March. Nor has it stopped them spending on new management posts or feasibility studies for the "exciting vision" of a grandiose Film Centre on the South Bank in time for the 2012 Olympics.

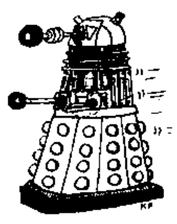
Meanwhile the BFI has been trying to find an "academic partner" on to which it can foist shared responsibility for its library, the nation's collection of documents related to film-making, with no sign of success so far. It is also planning to dismantle BFI Trading, which looks after book publishing, stills sales and so on. News that the book arm is likely to be sold to a commercial publisher has outraged film academics who have accused the BFI of trying to "steamroller through a badly conceived plan to solve a funding crisis".

Institute director Amanda Neville insists the BFI's library and archive will be "at the heart of" the Film Centre – if it happens, and if either collection survives that long.

OH, YEAH? "I think Britain's Got Talent was an amazing leap of faith by Simon Cowell – both to trust that this great swell of hidden talent would emerge, and to have confidence that people would enjoy watching an old-fashioned variety show. But he was right to have faith. It's been a tremendous success, and I think people will already be excited about the next one."

– Gordon Brown, Independent

BIRTSPEAK 2.0

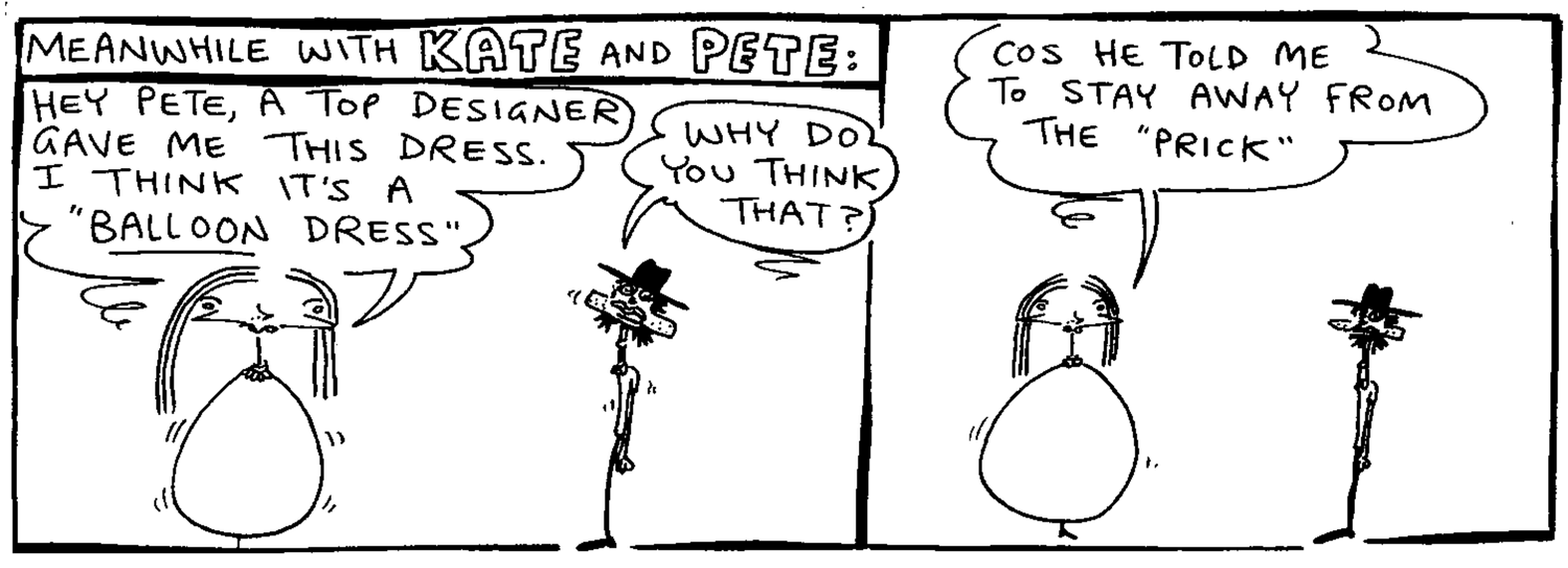


"The Multiplatform, Innovation and Development Studio, one of the production studios in the BBC, brings together multiplatform teams from drama, entertainment, comedy and factual for the first time into one centre of excellence. Alongside interactive production, we co-ordinate development, innovation and production modernisation across Vision Studios, providing expertise and creativity to projects in all genres… The role will work with senior management to identify studio strategy and objectives and ensure the staff and talent base are fit for purpose. The role will report to the Group Managing Editor Factual London studios, with dotted line to Head of the Multiplatform Studio."

– Job advert, BBC

SUPERMODELS

KERBER


MEANWHILE WITH KATE AND PETE:
HEY PETE, A TOP DESIGNER GAVE ME THIS DRESS. I THINK IT'S A "BALLOON DRESS"
WHY DO YOU THINK THAT?
COS HE TOLD ME TO STAY AWAY FROM THE "PRICK"

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

PORN TO RUN

PROMINENT Lib Dems in the London borough of Southwark, including Simon Hughes MP and deputy group leader Cllr Caroline Pidgeon, now prospective parliamentary candidate for Vauxhall, were taken aback when local Lib Dem activist and Ministry of Defence press officer Karl Lindon was charged with a string of paedo-porn offences. He is now serving a three-year jail sentence (*Eye* 1187).

Yet Southwark Lib Dems, for whom Lindon's company, Beyond Ego, had previously hosted websites, including Hughes's and Pidgeon's, already knew that Lindon was involved in UnabashedHosting, a cheesy web company set up by Lindon and his partner Martin Hoscik, "aimed specifically at members of the adult entertainment sector such as strip and lapdance clubs, model agencies, models & retailers of adult toys, clothing, magazines and audio/video merchandise".

Unabashed, its website boasted, it "[had] a less restrictive policy governing the nature of images than many family and general audience hosts. Any images which are legal under UK law are permissable [*sic*] with the exception that we do not provide hosting for 'hardcore' material which we define as follows: penetration, body fluids or gratuitous close-ups of sexual organs." [*Steady, Ming!*]

When Southwark Labour councillors Fiona Colley and Susan Elan Jones, who were fighting plans for a proposed lapdancing club in the area, raised Lib-Dem links to Unabashed last year, they were attacked both by Lindon, who with enormous brass neck threatened to sue for libel, and by Lib Dem blogger and council candidate Andy Meyer, who described Jones's "cheap remarks about one of our ward organisers [Lindon] who has a website business" as "shameful". Nine months later Lindon is in jail and Meyer has wisely gone quiet on the subject of what is and isn't shameful.

● **THE DAY after the downpours and flooding which hit Yorkshire last week, *Eye* reader Graeme Innes-Johnstone went for a walk near his home in Elland. The River Calder was in full spate, some six feet above its normal level. Hundreds of homes in Calderdale were without electricity; trains were cancelled; roads were closed. More heavy rain was forecast. But, in Victoria Road, Elland, Mr Innes-Johnstone was relieved to see some things returning to normal. Two members of the Calderdale council's parks department were hard at work watering the hanging baskets.**

DOWN THE DRAIN

ISN'T IT time someone got a grip on the pursestrings at Sheffield city council?

In March last year the *Eye* revealed how Red Tape Studios, part of the council's employment unit, secretly used a grant of £20,000 from the BBC's Children in Need appeal, meant to be used to put disadvantaged teenagers on music technology courses, to plug a hole in its accounts. Employees were pressured to falsify documents in order to cover up the scam (*Eye* 1155).

Then in July 2006 the city's trading standards unit, shared with three other councils, was closed after it emerged that fraudulent accounting going back many years had hidden losses totalling £14m. The black hole, which Inspector Knacker is still peering into, was uncovered after the death of the unit's manager, Mike Buckley.

Last year the council decided to overhaul its financial systems, or what in the jargon is known as ERP – "enterprise resource planning". A firm of consultants called Insight Management and Systems was brought in to look at how Sheffield's ERP systems were performing. Insight recommended a major upgrade of the software system, called Oracle EnterpriseOne [*sic*]. The project was dubbed the "World Class Financial Systems Program" (WCFS). Alas, after a year of employing up to 16 "consultants" from Insight and PA Consulting at rates of between £750 and £2,000 a day *each* there has, according to one insider, been "no noticeable progress towards a configured software solution".

WCFS is what is called an "invest to save" project. That means: "It may look expensive now, but, hey, it'll save you a packet in the future." It is officially projected to cost Sheffield more than £1.5m a year until 2010 – a total of at least £4.9m. By the end of that time, it is claimed, it will have "saved" the council £6.2m through increased efficiency. Insiders, however, believe the project could actually end up costing up to £5m more than it saves. But by then the £2000-a-day consultants' BMWs will have long since purred away.

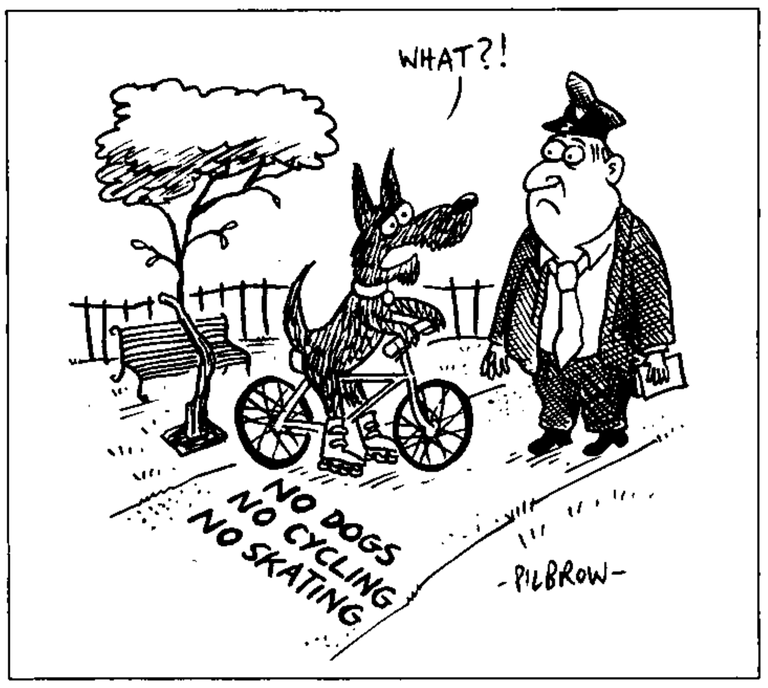
BEALE APPEAL

TIME was short, the *Observer* reported on 24 June, for campaigners who wanted to save the 17th century Hampshire home and studio of Mary Beale, Britain's first professional female painter, from the clutches of developers.

Beale enthusiasts, who have the support of local MP Chris Huhne and figures such as Sir Roy Strong, Germaine Greer and Tracey Emin, want to preserve boarded-up Allbrook Farmhouse, near Eastleigh, Hants, and its wooded grounds as a shrine to Beale and an amenity for local residents.

Owners Forelle Estates have different ideas. They want to "restore" the house as an upmarket residence and build another eight "executive style" homes with double garages in the grounds. Eastleigh council rejected Forelle's plans, but last month the developer appealed to the planning inspectorate (PI), whose decision is final. With the deadline for comments on the scheme set at 28 June, objectors had to get their skates on if they wanted to make their views known to the PI.

In line with the drive towards "e-government", the PI encourages interested parties to make submissions online. It's supposed to be easy – you just type in a case code number and submit your



comments on screen. Alas, in the finest tradition of government IT projects, it doesn't work. Or rather, it does work if you omit the last three digits of the code number, but neither the PI or council websites tell you to do that. The PI refused to extend the deadline for objections to give protesters time to use snail mail instead. Isn't e-democracy wonderful? More details: *www.marybealetrust.org.uk*

● **THREE CHEERS for London borough of Newham mayor Sir Robin Wales, who has found an inspirational champion for his Newham sports academy's search for young Olympic talent in the borough. The Labour council's academy has "teamed up" with the *Daily Express* – whose proprietor Richard "Dirty" Desmond certainly has an eye for young talent! His "fantasy" channel Television X features young persons engaged in a wide variety of athletic activities on shows such as *Filthy British Lesbo Sluts*, *Big Cock Sensations* and [*That's enough smut* – Ed.]**

FISHY BUSINESS

IN 2005 the *Eye* reported how Shetland Island Council (SIC) chief executive Morgan Goodlad had failed to declare an interest when the council invested, via the Shetland Development Trust (SDT), £1m in a fish farm company, SSG Seafoods, of which his brother, Alistair, was chairman. SSG collapsed in December 2003 with debts of £13.5m, having swallowed a total of £7m in public money via the SDT.

Goodlad always insisted he had nothing to do with pumping money into his brother's firm. "I was not involved in any form of decision-making process with SDT in relationship to SSG, nor could I," he told the *Shetland Times* in 2004. He was backed by council leader Sandy Cluness, who wrote in 2005: "At none of the meetings which had any bearing on SSG do I detect involvement of the chief executive in the reports or in the discussion."

As we remarked in *Eye* 1130: "Cluness and Goodlad seem to have suffered a major memory lapse." Now, after a two-year investigation, the Scottish Services Public Ombudsman has agreed with the *Eye*. In a report into the affair which finds Goodlad guilty of "maladministration", she writes: "I cannot conclude that the [chief executive] was unaware of his brother's connection." Just fancy that!

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER

COMING TO FARQUHAR'S WEDDING HAS BEEN A FABULOUS EXPERIENCE!
I JUST LOVE THE SCOTTISH TRADITIONS: BAGPIPES, WHISKY, HAGGIS...
IT'S JUST A SHAME OUR MINI KILTS SEEM TO BE UPSETTING THE LOCALS...

EDUCASHUN NEWZ

PUPILS and teachers at Exeter's five new PFI secondary schools have had to put up with a lot, including sweltering heat, flea outbreaks and the closure of playing fields because sharp building materials were left sticking out of them (*Eye* 1181).

So they cannot have been too surprised last month when the water running out of one of the school taps started to turn blue.

The problem has been diagnosed as something in the school's internal plumbing, rather than the external water supply. Carillion, which built and manages the buildings after taking over the £135m contract from Mowlem, has had to provide bottled drinking water while tests are carried out. Whatever next?

NOOKS and CORNERS

IS IT human nature or just the nature of the United Kingdom that makes people bugger up fine things almost as soon as they have been created? Take the extension to the Ulster Museum in Belfast.

This is one of the comparatively few really good buildings erected in Northern Ireland in the last century. It is a conspicuously brilliant product of that difficult decade, the 1960s, and is increasingly recognised as being of international significance. Yet the museum authorities want to "transform the interior of this familiar landmark" in order, they claim, "to make a visit... a much more enjoyable and memorable experience".

Needless to say this involves (at huge cost) having more cafes, a bigger shop and insisting that the collection is inescapably accessible to someone with the mental age of a child. If that seems unfair, I note that the public accounts committee at Westminster recently accused those in charge of the Ulster Museum of "profound deficiencies in custodianship".

The story of the Ulster Museum is curious and poignant. A competition for a new Municipal Museum & Art Gallery in the Botanic Gardens was won in 1911 with a grand Edwardian Baroque design by J.C. Wynnes. Owing to the Great War and Ireland's subsequent troubles, less than half of this was built before work stopped in the 1920s.

Fast forward to 1963, by when continuing with the original design was unthinkable, and a competition was held to complete the building. It was won by the English architect Francis Pym, the brilliance of whose design is the integration of old and new. Instead of the usual arrogant solution of building something completely different to (and discordant with) the existing architecture, Pym extended the original cornice lines and Portland stone rustication until – at different levels – they turn into massive horizontal cubic projections of raw concrete.

It was an idea later pursued with far less intelligence and success by Robert Venturi when he extended the National Gallery in London. But in Belfast, Brutalism and Baroque are combined seamlessly. When it was newly finished, the architectural historian Mark Girouard compared the museum to "one of those incomplete Michelangelo statues in which a highly finished torso emerges out of a block of rough hewn marble".

Pym's extension is a powerful sculptural design in its own right, with echoes of German Expressionism as well as of Le Corbusier. Inside, the galleries were dramatically arranged in a sort of rectangular spiral – inspired by Wright's Guggenheim, perhaps – so that the visitor performed a journey before reaching the larger galleries at a higher level. But the story has a sad ending.

By the time the Ulster Museum was completed in 1971 – at the height of Northern Ireland's troubles – the architect had resigned. The Ministry of Finance had taken over construction half way through and relations had become difficult. It was all reminiscent of the contemporary saga over the Sydney Opera House with the sacking of its architect. Then Pym abandoned architecture and became ordained as an Anglican priest.

Meanwhile, over the years his single masterpiece was slowly altered and spoiled. And now it is proposed to spoil it much more. The museum has now closed (depriving the people of Belfast for three years) and Hamilton Architects have been commissioned to make radical alterations. These include moving the main entrance and glazing in underneath the existing and dramatic Corbusian entrance canopy – for the Ulster Museum is rare among modern buildings in having the front door clearly expressed. New openings are also to be cut in some of the internal walls and an obtrusive new roof placed over the whole building.

Amazingly, although the museum is listed, these mutilations are approved by the province's Environment and Heritage Service. Even more amazingly, although the money for cultural projects is diminishing because of the Olympics, the Heritage Lottery Fund has offered £4.5m towards this gratuitous scheme. But there is also strong opposition, both local and national, and the Ulster Architectural Heritage Society has demonstrated how improvements could be made and problems of disabled access overcome without wrecking this extraordinary building.

Why ruin something that is really good and very special? In Sydney, they are now trying to make amends by properly completing and restoring the celebrated Opera House according to the original concept. Why not do the same in Belfast?

BACK to the European City of Culture for 2008, where Liverpool council continues to echo the late Reichsmarshall Goering's attitude to culture [Eyes passim ad magnam nauseam].

Opposite the noble ruin of St Luke's Church in Berry Street was a little Georgian building that had managed to survive both the Blitz and 1960s planning. Last year it "went on fire", as they say. Permission was then granted for the demolition of the rear elevations but English Heritage insisted the façade would stay. The building has now entirely disappeared. This follows the recent losses of (listed) houses in St Anne Street and of a terrace in Stanhope Street.

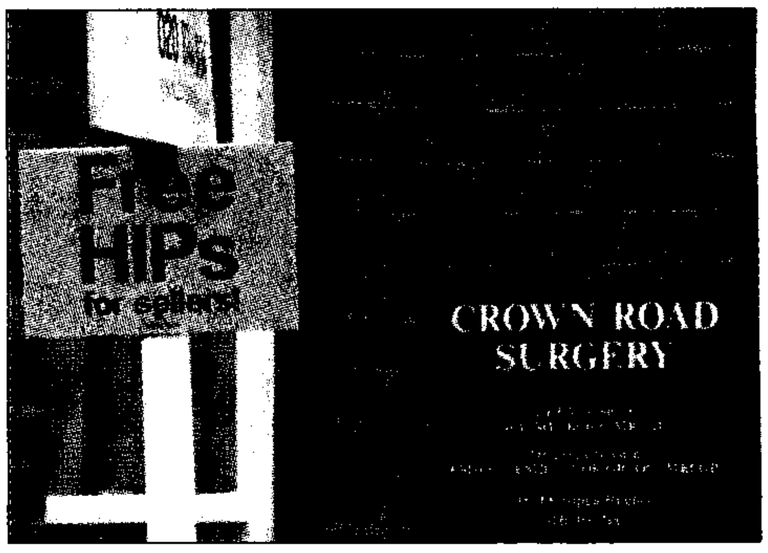
'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH

Apparently the subjects are brilliantly observed, and painted with meticulous attention to detail.
NATIONAL GALLERY
DUTCH PORTRAITS: THE AGE OF REMBRANDT AND FRANS HALS
They didn't know any better in those days.
Sad, really...

I-SPY *Twickenham*



Submitted by Baz Taylor. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs)*

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

JUST as everyone but the culture secretary and a few Merseyside councillors feared, the preparations for Liverpool's year as European Capital of Culture 2008 are close to breaking point.

It's now clear that if the city doesn't take immediate action – like airlifting in someone with a semblance of authority and vision to take control – the whole event will be an international embarrassment.

Readers may recall how the Liverpool Culture Company, set up by the city council to run operations, got into trouble from the start when it handed artistic control to a cabaret singer, Robyn Archer, who promptly disappeared. Initially her absence was explained as a worldwide search for talent. But when it emerged that no suitable talent had been found and Ms Archer was still absent (tending her sick mother in Australia) her services were dispensed with, leaving the programme looking desperate. And empty.

With six months to go, it doesn't look much better. The website offers the thinnest imaginable list of events, many of them qualified by the ominous caveats "to be confirmed" or "dates to be specified". Some would have happened anyway and have been dragged under the 2008 umbrella, while others are so unconnected they began in 2007 and have simply been teased out.

As for the rest, the "highlights" are listed as rap dancing, a Chinese lantern procession, the People's Festival ("football, fashion and music"), and a catwalk parade in which the wives and girlfriends of local footballers model clothes from a Liverpool boutique to music composed by Michael Nyman. For a programme that the organisers claimed would attract £2bn in investment and earn £220m in tourist income, it's pitiful.

But the grand claims have continued despite such thin pickings. The website quotes city council leader Joe Anderson, cited as a board member, commending the year's "high profile events" and asserting that they are "going in the right direction". Alas, Mr Anderson has just resigned after slamming the whole enterprise as elitist, irrelevant and a waste of taxpayers' money – much of it frittered, he alleges, on meals in top restaurants for Culture Company officials and their cronies.

The company's chairman, Drummond Bone, said the dinners were integral to delivering "a high-quality programme for national and international audiences". Which is to say, the catwalk WAGS prancing about to Michael Nyman. Meanwhile, the bodies are piling up, the latest being events manager Lee Forde, who resigned because of what a spokesman called "disillusion" with the programme.

Will Liverpool 2008 happen at all – and if it does, will anyone care?

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

Letters

Wright response

Sir,

Re O.B.N. (p9, 1187).

I thought that Dr Tony Wright MP was rather clever with his comment, which, in full with response, was:

Q196 Dr Wright: You are almost certainly one of the nicest people ever to have been Prime Minister of this country – (Laughter)

Mr Blair: What is coming now then?

Q197 Dr Wright: But your successor is going round saying that the job is to rebuild trust. How can this be? Is that code for Iraq, do you think?

And there is little respect for any politician at this address in the darkest norf.

Keep up the good work, etc.

Yours faithfully,
MICHAEL SARGENT,

Sale, Cheshire.

That new Broon...

Sir,

As a fellow countryman of our new Prime Minister, I have been following the comments regarding your new cartoon strip "The Broonites" with interest. I feel I must offer an observation. It is not true to state there are simply only two or three storylines as claimed in recent letters. There is, in fact, another storyline often regurgitated by the Sunday Post:

Paw Broon takes offence at a perceived insult to his virility or competence, usually related to his age, and undertakes some form of challenge or a stunt to prove that he has what it takes when compared to his more youthful or virile rival. This invariably ends up with him falling flat on his face or making a public spectacle of himself, to the amusement of all.

Perhaps life imitates art after all?

Yours faithfully,
IAIN PATON,

Kirkcaldy, Fife.

Sir,

Having cleared the loft and being temporarily distracted by an old Broons Annual I can confirm that Eric Brown of that Ilk (1187) is incorrect in suggesting no stories were set in a pub. He forgets the hilarious episode where Pa, Joe and Hen imbibe to excess and then lose the house keys down a drain. Surprisingly they get arrested for lowering Joe into the drain in an effort to retrieve them and Ma has to rescue them from the jail. I suppose the Polis had less calls on their time in those days.

IAIN MACAULAY,

Glasgow.

Old Spice Girls

Current status:	**Flood Warning**
Status last changed at:	**11:09 on 25-Jun-2007**
Location:	**British Waterways car park.**

Environment Agency website

Barking watchdog

Sir,

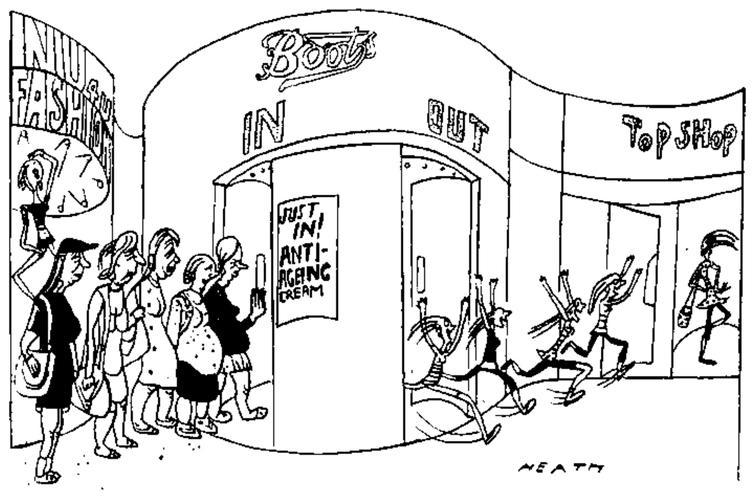
Concerning the News of the Screws "investigation" by the PCC (Eye 1187). The PCC did not "pathetically clear" Coulson. He was no longer in the newspaper industry, so the toothless PCC no longer had jurisdiction. That's what you get when you expect ad hoc bodies to investigate within their own industry. Had the PCC asked to interview Coulson, no doubt he would have told them what he would have told Private Eye in the same circumstances – "Get stuffed!"

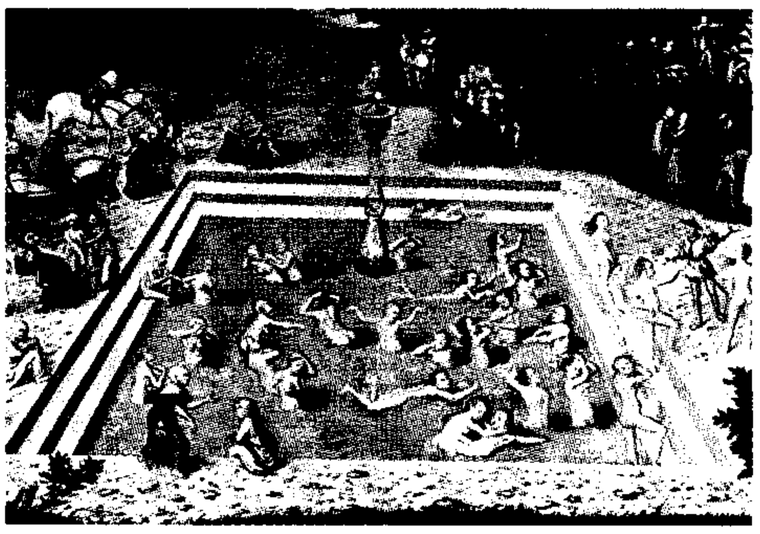
Newspaper editors? I'd jail the lot of them anyway.

LOUISE BATHAM,

West Bromwich.

Lookalike





Sir,

I was going to inquire whether your cartoonist Heath is by any chance related to Lucas Cranach the Elder... but as they are separated by almost 500 years, it seems rather unlikely. Unless he found the Fountain of Youth, of course...?

Best regards,
ALENA NOVAKOVA,

Via email.

Mine of information

Sir,

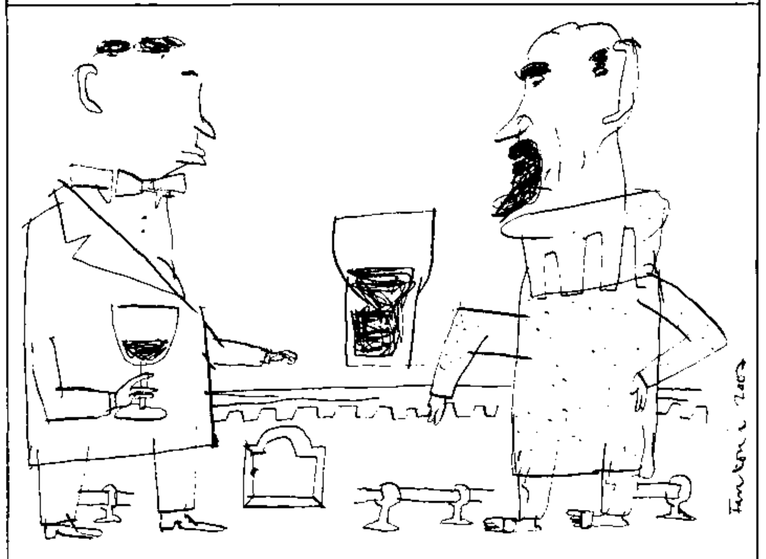
The landfill problem can be solved by reopening a selection of the hundreds of abandoned and mothballed UK mines. Many can with safety be activated by the skilled men who so recently worked them. Below ground there remain the roadways and machinery which moved millions of tons of coal and minerals. The hysteria over waste disposal would subside, weekly collections restored and the blinkered politicians and lunatic EU rulings avoided. The upper mine capacities could absorb 50 years of waste without even having to reopen the deeper levels leaving ample time for calmly reviewing the whole waste disposal concept to the advantage of UK consumers.

Sincerely,
ANTHONY CADMAN,

Fulham SW6.

(I write as the retired Director General of the Brick Industry who in the 1970s achieved the revaluation of the abandoned clay pits by recognising their value for landfill.)

Scenes You Seldom See



"I didn't expect much from Blair to begin with, but the longer he went on, the more I trusted him"

So clued up

Sir,

I am afraid I noticed an error in your latest issue (1187). Your cartoon about Cluedo on the Woolmer case was very funny, but in Cluedo it is not Professor Plum who gets murdered, it is Dr Black. Prof Plum is merely one of the suspects.

Yours faithfully,
OLLIE RANDALL,

Via email.

Rich pickings

Sir,

Your review of Peter Jones' book "Tycoon" (Literary Review, 1187) was weak and insipid because it failed simply to point out the fundamental flaw in Jones' argument, and in the same argument advanced by the other similar works.

The real argument against all this nonsense is, I'm afraid, a purely political one. That the vast majority of folk don't become millionaires is not an unfortunate by-product of capitalism, it is an essential requirement. Anybody can, just so long as everybody doesn't. The success of the minute few is crucially dependent on the relative failure of the many. Sadly, the argument applies not only within this country between the filthy rich and the very poor, but also between the nations of the world which describe themselves as "successful" and those which contribute to their success.

Yours faithfully,
BRYN GLOVER,

Cracoe, North Yorkshire.

Skull and cross

Sir,

Sorry to be a persistent pedant but the turquoise-encrusted skulls which Damian "The Omen" Hirst shamelessly copied WERE Aztec, as I wrote on p94 of my previous email. They were NOT Mayan and they were NOT Missoni.

Yours wistfully,
E. NAMEINPRINT,

Via email.

"Is that man smoking?!"

Who's invading whom?

Sir,

Re Deportation. Just Not British (In the Back, 1187).

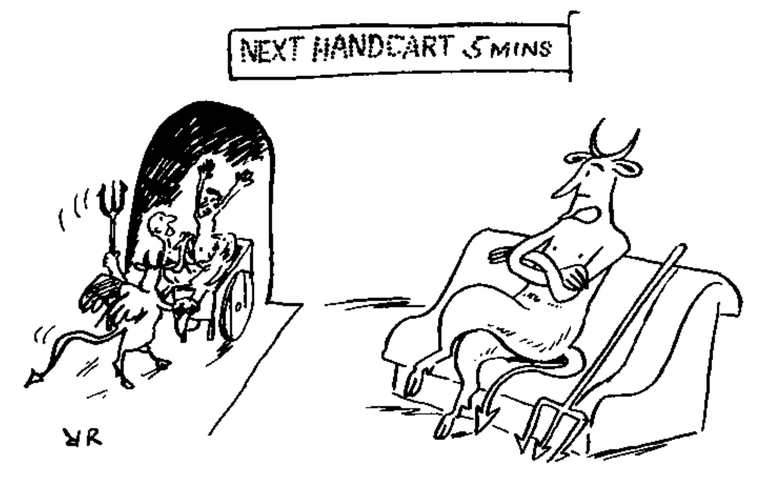
Just a small correction (not that the Serbs would see it as such). Your article on Perparim Demaj and his possible deportation stated that "he arrived in Britain from Kosovo after fleeing the Serbian invasion of 1998". It would have been difficult for the Serbs to have invaded Kosovo having regard to the fact that Kosovo is an integral part of Serbia and is regarded by the Serbs as the heart of Serbia. It was part of Serbia well before the formation of the Yugoslav federation in 1918.

I presume that Mr Demaj is an ethnic Albanian and since the end of the first world war, Albanians migrated to Serbia (their next door neighbour) in ever increasing numbers. They had an average of six children per family as opposed to the Serbs' two per family and became the majority some 20 years or more ago. Independence for Kosovo is being proposed by Britain and the US, which would mean a Greater Albania. This will be opposed by the Russians.

Perhaps we can look at Kosovo as a pointer to the future for Britain when Muslim migrants become the majority and demand independence?

Yours faithfully,
JOHN F. WARREN,

Wolverhampton.



Sir,

Re "In The Back" (p29, 1187). I have sometimes found these pages tendentious and unbalanced in their support of perceived victims. This is obviously so in the report concerning the so-called refugee Dr Demaj.

Until NATO intervention, Kosovo was an integral part of Serbia. Now, owing to that intervention, it has become detached, ruled by the ethnic Albanians formerly of the "terrorist" Kosovo Liberation Army.

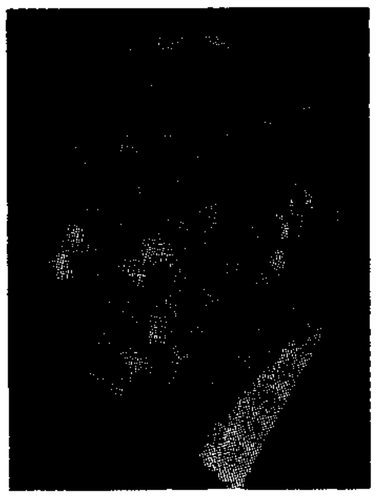
This being the case, Mr Demaj and his family can scarcely be considered as refugees. In fact, surely he should be ready and willing to return and become a "valued employee" in his homeland. On the other hand, some of his compatriots are involved in drugs and prostitution rackets and we should all support the Home Office in their efforts to send back these unwelcome guests, as we have enough home-grown criminals already.

Yours factually,
PHILIP KEMP,

Dereham, Norfolk.

Lookalike

Bourn



Gere

Sir,

Have you noticed the remarkable likeness between fun-loving head of the National Audit Office Sir John Bourn and fun-loving Hollywood superstar Richard Gere?

Could they be related, do you think?

ENA B. SUCHET,

Teddington, Middlesex.

Can't count

Sir,

Your in-house abacus clearly sprang a leak when it came to calculating the cost per book of the advance made to Iain Duncan Smith for his compelling tome (969 sales to date) "The Devil's Tune". The correct figure should, of course, have been £2.58 per copy sold and not £3.59 as printed.

Yours fraternally,
JOHN NORTH,

Newcastle upon Tyne.

● Apologies. There was a typesetting error. The chart should have shown sales of 696 copies, not 969 (but £3.59 was in fact correct).

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

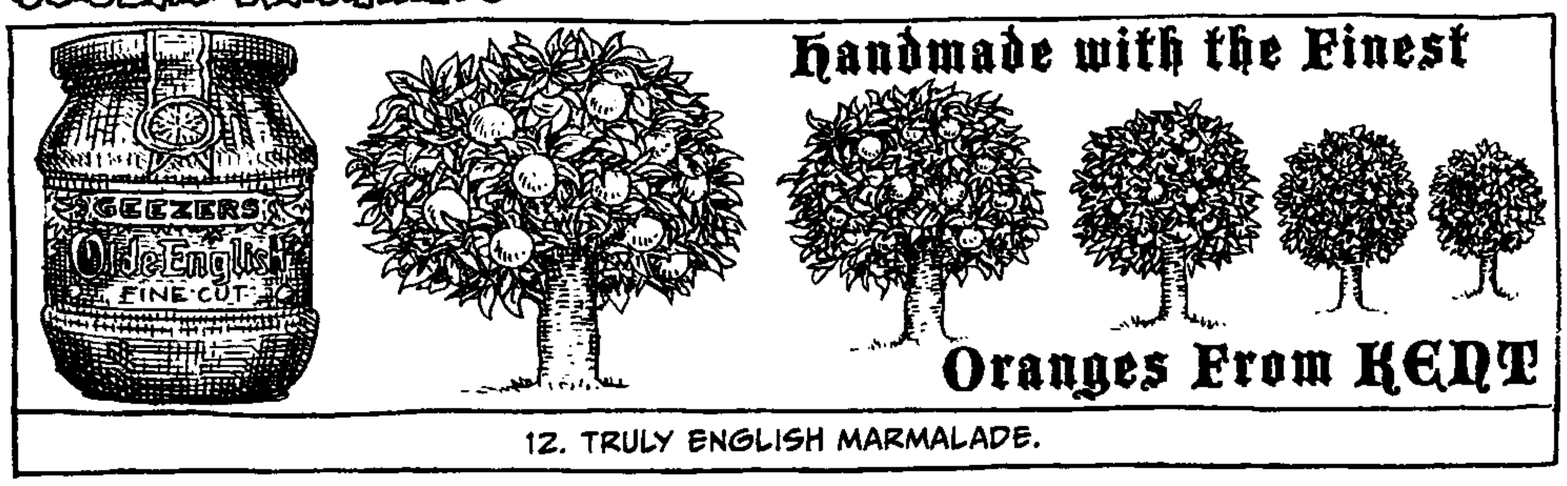
"Bell hangs his head in the air, looking up at the sky."
HENRY BLOFELD, TMS
(Stanley Hooper)

"He [Lewis Hamilton] is an excellent driver, both in and out of the car."
RON DENNIS, ITV
(Tina Hammond)

"He [Tim Henman] is one of the world's best returners in terms of getting the ball back."
JOHN LLOYD, BBC, BBC1
(Michael White)

"He will get a bite of two cherries at the same time."
COLIN CROFT, TMS
(David Zoltowski)

"Today is the day Tony Blair steps, quite literally, into the history books."
TOM BRADBY, ITN
(Ged Parsons)



SOLUTIONS

INTERNATIONAL

"Taxipost: Belgian Post Solutions" – *mail* **(Belgium)**

"Novotel City Breakfast: Enjoy a different breakfast solution until midday" – *breakfast* **(Belgium)**

"Angelica: Delivering Linen Management Solutions Everyday" – *laundry* **(New York)**

"Koppernaes Tingstad: Symbolising the best in complete solutions" – *nuts and bolts* **(Norway)**

"Tentipi: the nordic tent solution" – *tents* **(Sweden)**

"Manx Waste Solutions Ltd" – *tip* **(Isle of Man)**

All submitted by readers

Cock tales all round?

Sir,

Piloti (1187) rushes to decry the University of Oxford's Radcliffe Infirmary "masterplan"'. Although it is peppered throughout with tedious Birtspeak, the proposal has several virtues. These include a new health centre to replace the present dilapidated concrete wreck up the road, and what promises to be a useful public thoroughfare connecting Walton Street to the Woodstock Road. Never mind that the plan makes far better use of the area's listed buildings than the NHS's monster standing there at present.

But what of St Paul's Church? Perhaps Piloti might like to visit around 1am this Sunday morning. Far from being a "multi-purpose hall" FREVD (to give it its pretentiously correct spelling) is in fact a cafe and cocktail bar. Even if the university were to steal its sunlight (which is far from certain: the current plan includes a number of possible configurations), I fear its visitors will be too tired and emotional to notice.

Yours etc,
DAVID WHITE,

Via email.

Conflict resolution

Sir,

Despite reading your article several times, I struggled to find any conflict of interest in the appointment of Prof Denis McDevitt as chairman of Andrew Wakefield's disciplinary panel (In the Back, 1186), only a vague implication that Prof McDevitt is not very good at his job.

Using the Eye's broad criteria for "conflict of interest", it seems that you would like all investigations to be carried out by persons who have no connection with or knowledge of the subject area. Though the Eye would seem to meet these criteria for comment on the MMR issue, it fails because of its historical and evidently ingrained opposition to MMR, despite the overwhelming evidence in favour of the vaccination.

MARK GUGAN,

Via email.

56. Chicken Al. Akbari (hot) **£6.45**
57. Arabian Night (fairly hot) **£6.45**
58. England Rose (mild or medium) **£8.95**
(in memory of Lady Diana)

Millennia Tandoori Restaurant, Enfield

Letter from **Rangoon**

from Our Own Correspondent

SHUNNED for years for human rights abuses and dictatorial tendencies, our military rulers have found a new way to get the world to take notice of *Burma*. We're joining the international nuclear club!

The International Atomic Energy Agency says it is surprised; the US is anxious; and China, our staunchest ally, is unhappy. But Russia has agreed to help build a nuclear reactor and North Korea is advising us on how to use it.

Naturally our fledgling nuclear industry will be for entirely peaceful purposes: our officials have already explained that it will promote vital medical research and provide a new source of energy. Quite why we need nuclear power when the Chinese are already helping us build so many dams in the north is not clear.

Moreover, it's odd that such a humanitarian project should have been placed in the less than gentle hands of Maung Aye, the regime's second most senior general, whose other main priority is to make sure the army is ready to deal with the US-led invasion our leaders believe is around the corner. Senior General Than Shwe has already moved his military base from Rangoon to the central hills, where a network of underground bunkers will keep top brass safe from air attack.

This project has hardly been a big secret. For years we have been sending hundreds of scientists, technicians and soldiers to train in nuclear technology in Moscow. We are also reaching out to others in the nuclear world. We keep close relations with Pakistan, apparently in the hope of gathering nuclear know-how.

While Islamabad is pretty firmly in Washington's orbit, the US would certainly have been concerned about the visit earlier this year of our deputy foreign minister, Kyaw Too, to Iran to study its nuclear programme. But it is the blossoming relationship with Pyongyang, itself a nuclear power and with whom we restored diplomatic relations in April, that so stresses the west – not least because several suspicious shipments have docked in Rangoon in the last nine months. This is according to a senior US state department official who has been tracking North Korean ships that leave the port from where America believes nuclear materials are shipped.

In November, after one North Korean ship docked, Washington reminded Rangoon that it had to search the vessel under UN sanctions imposed after North Korea's maiden nuclear test a month earlier. Our leaders reported back three days later, saying the vessel contained nothing untoward or suspicious. So that's all right, then.

Only last month another North Korean vessel arrived in Rangoon. Officially it was sheltering from a storm. Unofficially, locals say it unloaded a cargo amid very tight security. No one is saying where the planned nuclear reactor will be located. But the smart money is on a site near the coast close to a deep sea port: it's where North Korean technicians visited last year.

It is not all one-way traffic, though, and we have something to offer the North Koreans too. According to officials, uranium deposits have been found in five different areas in central and northern Burma. Some are already being mined and several other sites are being explored. The US suspects the North Korean ships that have docked in Rangoon are transporting our uranium back to Pyongyang.

Our boffins insist the planned nuclear reactor will not be capable of making the substantial amounts of enriched uranium needed for nuclear bombs or military use. That may be so – but it is still a step towards a nuclear capability. Given what our military rulers have been doing to our people for so long, this should be enough to make the rest of Asia and the world very afraid.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "My son first became interested in online games three years ago," the father of Xiao Wen told reporters in Shanghai, "and he's been addicted to them ever since. At first he just played them at home, but then he started going to cyber cafes, where the computers are faster, and often stayed there for days at a time. That was bad enough, but then he began refusing to take bathroom breaks, and started wearing a large nappy, so he could sit at the machine without even visiting the toilet. The manager of the cyber cafe complained to me about the stink, but when I went there to tell Xiao that he stank, and to insist that he quit, he pulled out a knife and slashed me. He's still there, dressed in a nappy with a spare boxful of the things by his computer, and nobody dares try to move him."

A spokesman for the Psychological Counselling Centre in Shanghai added that "all parents should watch out for signs of online game addiction in their children. If your son is missing meals or sleep so he can play games, he has a problem. And if he'd rather soil himself than take a bathroom break, or attacks people who interfere with his games, then trouble is afoot." *(Xinwen Evening News, 17/4/07. Spotter: Richard J. Daly)*

– ● –

● *"Even though everyone calls it 'cat crap coffee,' Kopi Luwak is the world's most exclusive bean," cafe owner Michelle Sharpe told reporters in Townsville, Queensland. "It's also the most expensive, with roasted beans selling at US$1,000 a kilo, because it's so difficult to harvest. When I tell you how it's made, you'll see why.*

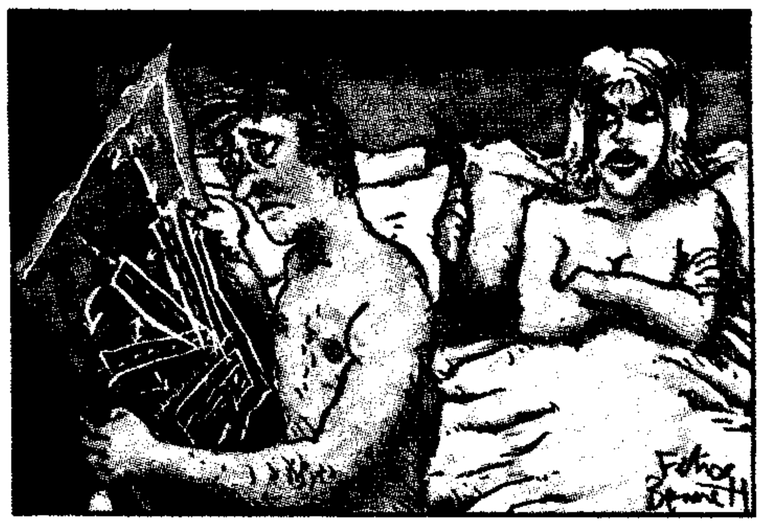
"Asian palm civets are only found on the Indonesian islands of Sumatra, Java, and Sulawesi, and they live wild in the forest, where they gorge on coffee berries. These pass through their digestive tract, and are then excreted, covered in stomach enzymes that help to remove the coffee bean's natural bitterness. Hunters go into the forest, searching for piles of civet faeces, and they rummage through them to collect these partially digested beans. Once gathered, they're lightly washed to remove the shit, then roasted only very gently, so as not to destroy the complex flavours."

Another restaurateur added "about a dozen people a month order Kopi Luwak at my cafe, at AUS$50 a cup, and they're always uplifted by the thrill of the experience. The taste? It's as good as my private life is bad. This is the kind of coffee you would renounce your religion and sell your children for." (New Zealand Herald, 17/5/07. Spotter: Tim Hill)

– ● –

● "Erectile dysfunction is a classical mechanical engineering problem," Professor Daniel Udelson told a conference at Boston University, "just like a column collapsing under the burden of a heavy roof. It's been known for years that intracavernosal pressure – that's the fluid pressure achieved by blood build-up in the two expandable caverns of the penis – should be between 60 and 90 millimetres of mercury for a healthy man, but it can drop to 30 mmHg in men with erectile dysfunction. That's why Viagra works. It relaxes arterial muscles and allows more blood to build up in the penis, which increases the pressure.

"However, I predicted that penis geometry ought to play a significant role in the robustness of an erection against the force of sexual intercourse. So I tested 57 men with erectile dysfunction by slowly injecting their penises



with saline solution until erect. I then applied a force to the tip of the penis, until it started to buckle. The force ranged from 2 kilograms right down to 0.3 kg.

"My mathematical model correctly predicted the buckling force for 80% of penises, but I discovered that the buckling force doesn't just depend on a man's blood flow and penis shape. It also depends on his partner's vagina. The force required to enter a vagina ranges from 1.5 to 2.5 kg, depending on diameter and lubrication, so an individual male may exhibit erectile dysfunction with one partner, but not with another." *(New Scientist, 2/5/07. Spotter: Brian Masters)*

apparently BY MIKE BARFIELD

POST-BLAIR NEW LABOUR: A SHADE CHART

BROWN

FAWN

FAWN

FAWN

FAWN

HAZEL

THAT ALL-CHANGE BROWN CABINET IN FULL

by Peter O'Bore

YES, it's the biggest reshuffle in the history of British politics as Gordon Brown unveils his glittering cabinet of all the talents.

OUT GOES **Jack Straw**, 69, the failed Foreign Secretary and Leader of the House.

IN COMES **Jack Straw**, 47, dynamic high flier who will take over the new-look Ministry of Justice.

OUT GOES **Des Browne**, 73, discredited Defence Secretary blamed for Iraq fiasco.

IN COMES **Des Browne**, 39, charismatic new Defence Secretary who will sort out the fiasco in Iraq.

OUT GOES **Ruth Kelly**, 42, ineffectual former Education Secretary and the minister widely blamed for the Housing Information Pack disaster.

IN COMES **Ruth Kelly**, 37, feisty, brilliant, trouser-suited member of Opus Dei. Charged with bringing a halt to Britain's transport. *(Is this right? Ed.)*

OUT GOES **Hazel Blears, Alistair Darling, Geoff Hoon, Hilary Benn** etc., etc.

IN COMES **Hazel Blears, Alistair Darling, Geoff Hoon, Hilary Benn** etc., etc.

THE OUTSIDERS

Brown has promised a Government that will look outside the traditional career structure to recruit the very best of British talent to bring a new-look to the whole process of decision making.

Inspector Knacker of the Yard. The 81-year-old former Metropolitan Police Chief is known to shoot from the hip even if he often gets the wrong man.

Sir Digby Redface, 72. Former CBI chief whose motto "Sod the workers" has endeared him to the new-look Labour party.

Admiral Sir Alan Pugwash. Falklands Naval hero who led a daring attack on Tony Blair *(Surely Port Stanley? Ed.)*

Dame Shirley Temple, 99. Former LibDem MP tap dancer and member of the Crazy Gang of Four, Dame Shirley has been given the brief of annoying Ming Cambell, 107.

RISING STAR

ED BALLS, 17

Ed is the high-flying new education expert who is the first cabinet minister still to be at school. He is widely regarded as a "safer pair of balls" and is married to fellow cabinet minister and childhood sweetheart, Mini Cooper, 16¾.

Alan Watkins writes

THOSE of us who were alive in 1806 will recall that the phrase "The Cabinet of All the Bores" which was formed in the summer of that year under Lord Deedes was an ill-fated venture which lost the support of the Whigs under Lord Lloyd-Webber and was soon forgotten. I well remember that *(cont. p. 94)*

INTRODUCING THE MILIBAND TWINS

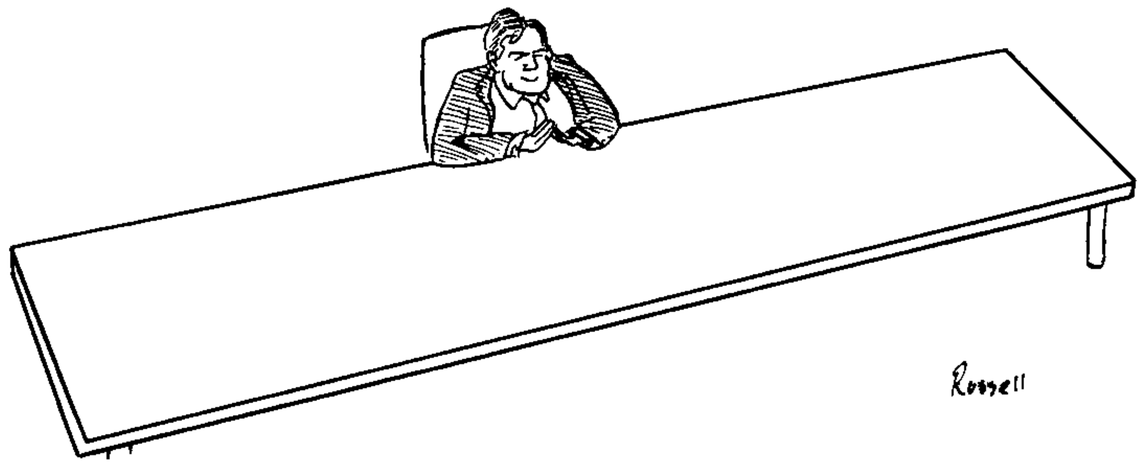
Ted or possibly Ed

IDENTICAL twins Ed and Ted Miliband bring a fresh pair of faces to Gordon Brown's Cabinet. They are already known as the Ant and Dec of politics. But which one is which? One is brilliantly clever and so is the other one. One is to become Foreign Secretary. The other is to do some other job. One is married to a high-flying violinist. The other to a violin-playing trapeze artist *(Is this right? Ed.)*. Both have got 1000 legs *(You're fired, Ed.)*.

How will Gordon tell them apart when they say "That's a very good idea, Sir, much better than Tony ever had"?

Can you tell the difference between Ted and Ed? It's more fun than Sudoku!

Ed or possibly Ted



'Brown unveils his ideal Cabinet of all the Talents'

GLENDA SLAGG

THE GAL WHO TELLS IT THE WAY SHE'S TOLD TO!?!!

■ HATS OFF to Padma Lakshmi!!?!! That's Lady Salman Rushdie to you Mister!!?! And for why am I taking my hat off to this Sultry Siren from the Land of the Sari?!?? Because she's given the order of the boot to the boring old bearded bookwallah!!?!! And about time too!??! The only mystery is how Poutin' Padma put up with the literary love-rat as long as she did!!?!

■ PADMA LAKSHMI!?!! What a disgrace?!! To desert Briain's Nobel-Prize-winning literary lion in his hour of need!?! Just when the Mad Mullahs are burning poor old Rushdie's books in the streets – where's Padma!?!! Instead of throwing water on the fire she's throwing her ring back at her hapless hubby!!?! Shame on you, Padma!!?! Auntie Glenda's declaring a fatwa on you!!?! Geddit?!??

■ SARAH BROWN – don'tcha-luvher!!?! She's got it all – career, good looks and a pair of legs to die for!?! And she's happy to sit in Gordon's shadow!!?! What a contrast to the ghastly Cherie, a-graspin' and a-gaspin' for every freebie she could get her greedy hands on!??!! Selfless, sexy Sarah is a breath of fresh air at Number Ten!!?! Make no mistake – she's the best First Lady since Denis Thatcher!!?

■ SARAH BROWN – aren'tcha-sickofher!?!! She's only been there ten minutes but already we've had enough of this puffed-up PR person!!?! Don't let her saintly smile fool you into thinking she's got a great pair of legs!!?! Cos she ain't!!?! She's a greedy go-getter who makes Cherie look like Mother Teresa!?!! Come back, Mrs Blair, all is forgiven!?!!

■ *HERE THEY ARE – Glenda's Diana Concert Dreamboats!?!!*

● **Simon Le Bon.** OK, so you're old and fat!?! That's the way I like 'em!?!!

● **Tom Jones** – OK, so you're old and fat!?! That's the way I like 'em!?!!

● **Sir Elton John** – OK, so you're old and fat and gay!?! Well, maybe not!?!!

Byeeee!!!

BROWN WELCOMES HARMAN

YES, IT'S 'NEW, NEW LABOUR'

That Gordon Brown Speech In Full

"

It's time for a change. A change is what it's time for. You've heard the word change. Now it's time to put change into action.

And the reason we need change is because we need a new approach.

We need to rebuilt trust between the people and their government. Because that is what has broken down.

The people have lost that sense of trust.

For too long they have been let down.

They have seen their pensions taken away from them. They have seen billions frittered away on schools and hospitals.

Their children cannot afford anywhere to live.

They have noticed I haven't mentioned Iraq yet.

And they rightly want to know who was responsible for all this. Well, let me tell you a story. When I was a wee bairn growing up in the small British town of Kircaldy, I went to the local school.

And not Eton or Fettes, like some people who didn't listen to the British people when they demanded change, particularly at the top.

And do you know what the motto of that school was? It was one I can never forget: *Usque conabor,* which means 'I will try my utmost' and is an important change from some other people's school mottoes, which must have read 'I shall lie my utmost'. But, as I said, things have changed and I learned there, in that small, British state school, the most important lesson of my life – 'Try, try and try again until you become prime minister.'

And I think what we have seen today shows just how true those words are.

As your new prime minister, I am proud to say that I am filled with humility at the thought of the task that lies ahead.

There is much to be done. There is much which needs to be changed. But I give you my solemn word that one thing will not change – whatever happens, I will do everything in my power to blame the previous government.

"

That Quentin Davies Defection Letter In Full

Dear David Cameron,

After several long and difficult minutes of thought, I have decided to accept Gordon's offer of making you look an idiot. As you must appreciate, it was not an easy decision. It was a very easy decision.

My reason for leaving the Conservatives and joining the Labour Party is simple. I no longer know what you believe in. You seem to have no fixed position at all. On one day you say one thing and the next you say the opposite.

Unlike me, who, as a conviction politician, was yesterday a committed Conservative and am today a lifelong Labour supporter.

Furthermore, as you will have read in all my statements to the press which Gordon's team helped me prepare, I cannot bear your obsession with PR.

I hope you understand my heartfelt decision and will welcome me back into the Party should I change my mind tomorrow.

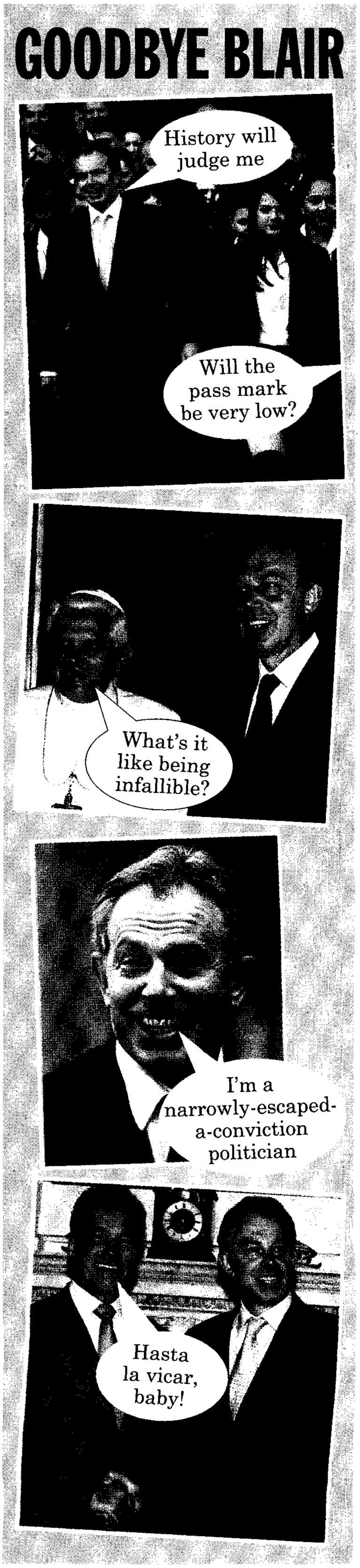
Yours,

QUENTIN DAVIES,

Yew Turn Cottage,

Much-Jumping-On-The-Bandwagon, AR 5E.

The Man In The City Who Said he Paid Income Tax


GOODBYE BLAIR
History will judge me
Will the pass mark be very low?
What's it like being infallible?
I'm a narrowly-escaped-a-conviction politician
Hasta la vicar, baby!

Nation Mourns 'The People's Prime Minister'

by Our Entire Staff

FROM early yesterday, the streets of London were lined with vast crowds drawn from all over the nation, weeping openly as they mourned the passing of the man they called simply "Princess Tony".

Every pavement was piled high with flowers wrapped in cellophane, many bearing such touching handwritten messages as "We shall always love you, Tony", "The world will be empty without you" and "God forgive Gordon for killing you, we never will".

By midday the police had erected crash barriers all down the Mall, as millions besieged Buckingham Palace, angrily demanding that the Queen reinstate Tony as their rightful king.

Premier of Hearts

Millions queued patiently for several minutes to sign books of condolence, while in St Paul's Cathedral, the Archbishop of Canterbury led a service of thanksgiving for the life of the man he described as "the nearest thing to a saint we shall ever see on this earth".

A highlight of the service was the world premier of a new "tribute song" by Sir Elton John entitled "Crocodile Tears Rock".

Never Glad Confident Mourning Again

As Big Ben chimed midnight, the entire nation was still trying to come to terms with their loss and, for some, grief was turning into something uglier.

"I blame the media," said one father of four, who gave his name only as T. Blair. "They hounded him out of office, especially the Independent. Bastards, going on about Iraq all the time when we'd drawn a line under it long ago.

"Make no mistake," he went on, "he was the best prime minister we've ever had. We shall never see my like again."

● Did you weep when you heard the news that Tony Blair had been forced out of office? Or were you watching the tennis? Or were you trying to clear the floodwater out of your living room? Anyway, whatever, we'd like to hear from you! Send us up to 1,000 words on any subject you like and, no matter how boring, we'll put it in our new 'Read It On The Blog' page. Just text or email your message to www.desperatetelegraphrubbish.co.uk.

"I've had enough, Bernard... I want you out"

EXCLUSIVE TO ALL NEWSPAPERS

'I WAS THERE AS THE LAST CIGARETTE WAS STUBBED OUT'

by **Lunchtime O'Boozebutnofags**

YES! I was there as a thousand-year-old British tradition finally came to an end in the smoke-filled snug of the Blackberry & Laptop (formerly The Lamb & Flag) in London's Fenchurch Street.

Here, along with dozens of die-hard smokers, I was determined to savour my nicotine pleasure for the last time before the bell struck midnight and the heavy hand of the nanny state ordered us all to "Put that fag out!".

I have to admit there was a tear in my eye because of the smoke and a lump in my throat because I've got cancer.

Why oh why have they betrayed all of us who fought in two world wars for the right to *(cont. p. 94)*

DAFT

DRAWING ALL FAITHS TOGETHER

Dear Friend,

You may have heard of me for the work I did in my former life as the Vicar of St Albion's in Britain, where for ten years I unfortunately had to spend too much of my time on mundane parochial matters, instead of concentrating on the need to bring peace to the world which has always been at the top of my agenda.

Now at last I have a chance to put my talents to their proper use as President of DAFT.

You know, when we look around the world today, we see nothing but war, hatred and conflict (except of course in Iraq, which is making an ordered and peaceful transition to a democratic country).

My task is to be chief emissary of The Quartet – which is not a reference to the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (War, Famine, Death and Plague) as various clever-dicks are suggesting but which is a description of the four pillars of our new world order: the UN, the EU, Russia, and of course my old friend George W. Bush. What I am going to do is to bring an end to the conflict which for too long has divided the great faiths of our world.

For thousands of years we have seen Jews warring with Christians, Muslims with Christians, Jews with Muslims, Muslims with Muslims and so on.

But it's not enough to say that, just because these ancient enmities have been raging for many centuries, then there is nothing we can do about it.

Which is why from now on I shall devote my time and effort to bringing about a miracle in what we all call the Holy Land.

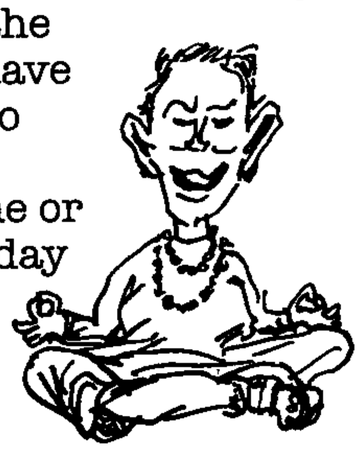
I know that many good men in the past have toiled in vain to bring about a reconciliation between all the warring parties.

But, hey – none of these men have been me! And why shouldn't I be the one to bring peace to the conflict in the Middle East? After all, I have brought the conflict in the Middle East to the streets of Britain *(Is this right? Ed)*

So, if you want to know more about me or the work of DAFT, why not join DAFT today and contact me on www.bush.co.us.

Looking forward to hearing from you,

TONY BLAIR



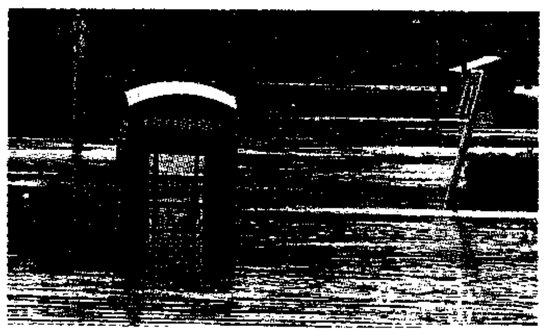
FLOODS OVERWHELM CENTRAL LONDON

WESTMINSTER yesterday became the latest victim of the extreme weather conditions currently affecting most areas of the British Isles.

In dramatic scenes in the House of Commons over six hundred people were nearly drowned as floods of tears rose to almost shoulder level.

One eye-witness told reporters, "We feared for our lives as the water level kept rising every time the Prime Minister opened his mouth."

Said another, "It's a miracle we are still alive. One minute it was an ordinary Prime Minister's



Question Time and we were happily asleep.

"But then Margaret Beckett began to sniffle and Patricia Hewitt welled up and suddenly the floodgates opened and the weeping began. In no time at all the water was lapping around our waists."

● Full report and pictures: **pp 3,4,5,6,94**.

That completely different EU Treaty that we don't need to have a referendum about

TEXT IN FULL

A ~~Constitution~~ Reform Treaty For The European Union

❶ There shall be a full-time President ~~of~~ for the EU.

❷ The EU shall have its own ~~Foreign Minister~~ High Representative.

❸ Nation states shall lose their right of veto over ~~all~~ most matters.

❹ The EU can do whatever it wants whenever it chooses, including ignoring the previous three articles.

❺ The rest of the ~~Constitution~~ Treaty shall remain the same *(take in remaining 900 pages of original text)*.

❻ Mrs Merkel to buy lunch for everyone as a reward for their ~~conniving in~~ agreeing to this ~~appalling deception~~ brilliant diplomatic triumph.

Advertisement

His cabinet told him to f* off. His party told him to f*** off. We all told him to f*** off. And at last he has!**

Believe in miracles

Blairnardos

FLOOD LATEST

NOAH HITS OUT

by Our Biblical Correspondent, **Ark Lawson**

A SENIOR religious figure, Mr Noah, today blamed recent floods on mankind's "degenerate behaviour". Speaking from his Ark, Mr Noah described the recent 40 days and 40 nights of persistent rain as "God's judgement" on all the people of the earth due to divine fury at the recent Gay Pride March through the streets of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The Bishop of Carlisle is 971.

Dave Snooty AND HIS PALS

FOR HE'S A JOLLY COURTEOUS FELLOW..
HANG ON DAVE - WHY ARE YOU CHEERING BEASTLY OLD BLAIR?
TA-TA TONY
BECAUSE HE WAS EVEN MORE UNPOPULAR THAN ME!!!
THAT'S TYPICAL OF YOU SNOOTY! YOU'RE ALL STYLE AND NO SUBSTANCE!
QUENTIN DAVIES
HOW DARE YOU SAY THAT! YOU'RE NOT EVEN WEARING CUFFLINKS!
OO-ER! WE'RE IN THE BROWN STUFF CHAPS!
BIFF!
SNOOTY TRAILS GORDON
SQUELCH
HOORAH! IT'S THE ETON BACKS-TO-THE-WALL GAME!

THE PRINCE OF GREENS

THE STORY SO FAR... Charles is delighted by his success at running an organic vegetable business. But is all as well as it seems?

A romantic summer read from the pen of Dame Sylvie Krin, author of La Dame Aux Camillas, Duchess of Hearts, Heir of Sorrows and hundreds more.

A STEADY June drizzle was falling on the celebrated Stuart Rose Garden at Highgrove.

Inside, Charles sat in the breakfast room, leafing through the pile of letters that had just been brought in by his faithful valet, Faucet, on a silver tray.

The Prince's face flushed with pleasure as he read a fulsome thank-you letter from the Auchtermuchty General Stores near Balmoral, informing him that they had just sold a record three packets of his Duchy Beetroot and Rhubarb Chocolate Hob-Nobs, only one of which had been returned by the customer.

And then there was a letter from the Chief Druid inviting him, in his role as Defender of All Faiths, to say a few words at Stonehenge during their next celebration of the Summer Solstice.

But what was this? A letter from Sainsbury's, no doubt congratulating him on the quality of his new Duchy range of organic vegetables, which had just appeared on the shelves of their supermarkets.

Wasn't this the greatest tribute that had ever been paid to his skills as an organic businessman and royal horticulturalist?

A beaming Charles slipped his ivory paper knife (a memento of an historic elephant shoot at Simla in 1903 by his great-great-grandfather Edward VII) into the envelope bearing the legend *"Sainsbury's – It All Tastes The Same"*.

But, as he read the text of the letter within, his face darkened and he furiously brought down his silver spoon on the hapless head of boiled egg No. 5.

"What's the matter, darling?" cried Camilla from across the table, as she lifted her eyes from the Easy Sudoku on the Coffee Break pages of the Daily Mail.

She had not seen her husband looking so distressed since the theft of his Mitchell & Webb watercolour set outside Cairo, when he was still only half-way through his study of the Pyramids By Moonlight.

"Listen to this, Cazza. It really is, well..." he thought long and hard, but the word wouldn't come. "Never mind." It was whatever it was and he began to read out to Camilla the letter which had caused him such visible distress.

"Dear Sir or Madam," it began. "Re your delivery of organic carrots of the 16th, we must inform you that, following an inspection by our Quality Control team, the deficiencies in your product were noted as below:

1. The carrots failed to comply with our firm's rigorous Wrinkle Standard. 17 of the 23 carrots tested were excessively wrinkled and would be perceived by our customers as too old to be fit for purpose.

2. There was some evidence of penetration of the carrots by root weevil, rendering the carrots limp and unsightly.

At this point, Camilla loyally interjected, "What a bloody nerve, Chazza!"

"No. There's worse to come," said Charles, reading on.

"In the view of our controllers, these carrots have been left in the ground too long. They are well past their prime and simply not good enough. Yours faithfully, M. Bovis, Area Purchasing Manager for Organic Vegetables and Barbecue Equipment, South-West Region (North)."

Charles hurled the offending missive across the table, where it landed in the remains of Camilla's Full English Breakfst, brought in from Ken's Mobile Breakfast Bar on the A46 Stroud lay-by.

Camilla rose and placed a soothing hand on her husband's shoulder, saying, "No wonder you're upset, Chazza. Why don't you go and have a lie down? Who does this little man think he is, talking to you like that about your wonderful carrots? It's simply not good enough..."

"SIMPLY not good enough." Charles inexplicably found himself lying prostrate on a cold, metal supermarket shelf.

An enormous woman in a white coat was looking severely down at him, prodding him with her finger.

"This one won't do. Too old, wrinkled, limp... and look at all these holes."

Come to think of it, thought Charles, the woman looked uncannily like the mater, Her Majesty the Queen.

And why was she working in a supermarket with a crown on her head? It didn't make any sort of sense. And why was he so small?

"Been in the ground too long!" barked a male voice in the background. "Weevils have got at him. Punters will never go for something looking like this."

Charles knew that voice! It was Pater, the Duke of Edinburgh, wearing a plastic badge on his white coat identifying him as "Phil Windsor, Vegetable Quality Control Supervisor".

Charles tried to respond from his recumbent position on the shelf. But it seemed the two giant figures could not hear him.

"I don't go for all this organic nonsense," growled the big man, as he put a huge cross in the "Quality Rating" box on the form on his clipboard.

"Just because it's covered in mud doesn't mean that it's any bloody good. We should chuck it out right away."

The giant hand reached out to Charles, who screamed in terror.

"You don't understand, you don't understand..."

"YOU don't understand..." Charles woke up with a start to find Camilla leaning over him looking concerned. "It's alright, darling," she said comfortingly. "You must have been having some horrid dream."

"Yes," he said, "it was really, you know..."

"What, darling?" she prompted.

"I can't think of the word," he replied, rubbing his eyes and walking over to the window for a breath of fresh air.

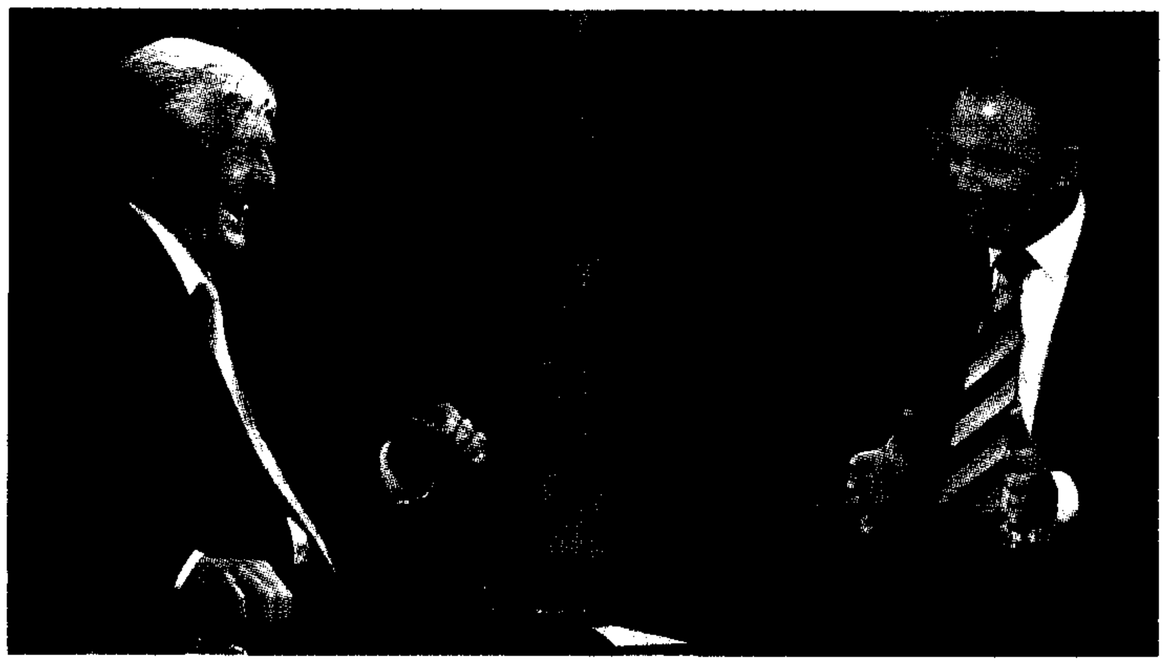
But, as he looked out, he saw a huge 40-tonne truck inscribed with the slogan *"Sainsbury's – Taste No Difference"*, backing up to the edge of the lawn, and disgorging a mighty cascade of rotting carrots all over his prize rose beds.

At last he remembered the word he had been trying to think of earlier. "Appalling." That was it. There was no other word for it.

© Sylvie Krin 2007.

Farewell to the King of the Chat Shows

by Our Showbiz Staff



Tony welcomes Parky onto his show

THE WORLD of television will never be the same again. In his long and distinguished career, he met everyone who was anyone and his irresistible cocktail of wit and charm captivated them all, from pop singer to Popes, from top Hollywood star to sporting legends.

The master of small-talk welcomed them onto his famous sofa and had his picture taken with them all.

None of us will ever remember what was said during his encounters with David Beckham, the Dalai Lama, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Nelson Mandela, Andy Flintoff, Bob Geldof, the Pope and the Spice Girls.

But the one incident which no one will forget was the wonderfully embarrassing encounter with the puppeteer George Bush, who treated his host as though he were a pet emu.

From the moment he greeted him with the derisive words "Yo, Blair", the smooth frontman of 1000 TV interviews knew that this time it was all going to go horribly wrong.

He tried to turn off the microphone in a desperate bid to save his dignity. But the damage was already done and only a few months later he had to resign.

In his retirement, Blairky plans to write his memoirs, listing all the famous people he has met during his dazzling, celebrity-filled career.

REMEMBER CHILDREN CIGARETTES ARE VEGETABLES AND AS SUCH ARE GOOD FOR YOU!
FURTHERMORE YOUR DAD AND I LIKE TO HAVE THE ODD ONE AFTER SEX!
GLUB!
GRAEME KEYES

Parents: how to turn your teens off smoking for life

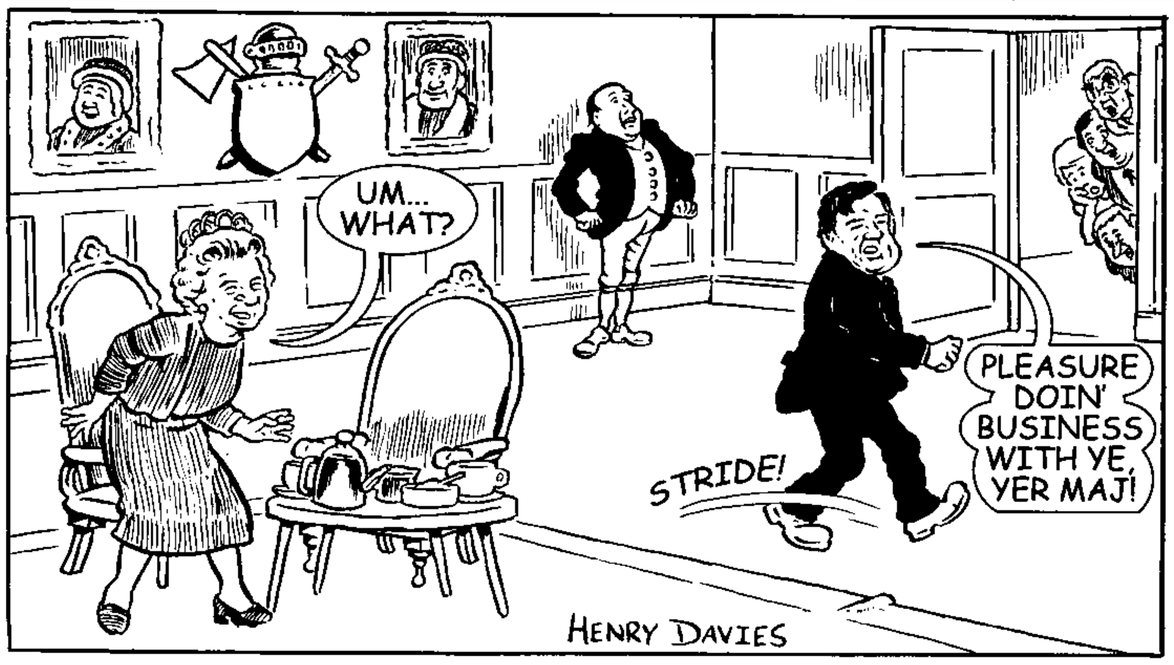
EXCLUSIVE TO ALL NEWSPAPERS, TV, RADIO, ETC.

10 YEARS OF RORY

TONY BLAIR looks back at the Bremner years and highlights the successes and failures of Britain's longest-serving TV impressionist. How will he be remembered?

Blair wonders whether Rory's undoubted talents will be eclipsed by his fatal error of taking himself far too seriously. The Prime Minister assesses Bremner's position in history and discusses his long-term legacy with such luminaries as Mike Yarwood.

THE BROON-ITES
THE JOCKISH JUNTA THAT GENERATE GIGGLES!
GORDON BROON'S HIGHTAILED IT UP TAE BUCK HOUSE TAE HAVE A WEE GABBY WITH LIZ THA' SECOND...
SO MR BROON, HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO FORM A GOVERNMENT FOR ONE?
WIST YER MOUTH, HEN...
AYE BEG YOUR PARDON?
HERE'S MA PROPOSITION. THE DEAL IS, YE STAY AS QUEEN FER A WEE WHILE, SMILE A WEE BIT, WEAR YER BAWBIES AND WAVE YER AULD HAND ABOUT...
THEN YE'LL STEP DOWN AN' BE AWA' AFTAE A FEW YEARS AND AH'LL TAKE OVER AS KING OF BRITAIN AN' BECOME THE HEID OF STATE!



WIMBLEDON SIX TO WATCH

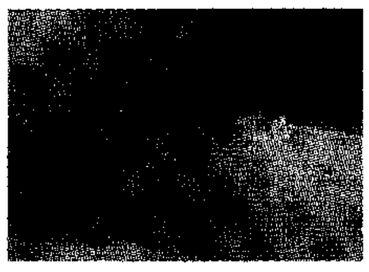
An Eye Cut-out-'n'-keep Guide To The Greatest Tennis Tournament in the World

Strato cumulus

Top-rated rain cloud with consistent Wimbledon form. Excellent on grass.

Cumulo nimbus

Delivers powerful rain which should guarantee a second week showing at the home of rain.



Nimbo stratus

A dark cloud *(surely "horse")* which some experts reckon has the ability to make it to the final and ruin everything.

That's enough clouds. Ed.

*"Old hotels and old beds always have lots of creepy-crawlies, but **this** bed seems to be free of bed-bugs at least"*

Mary Ann Bighead

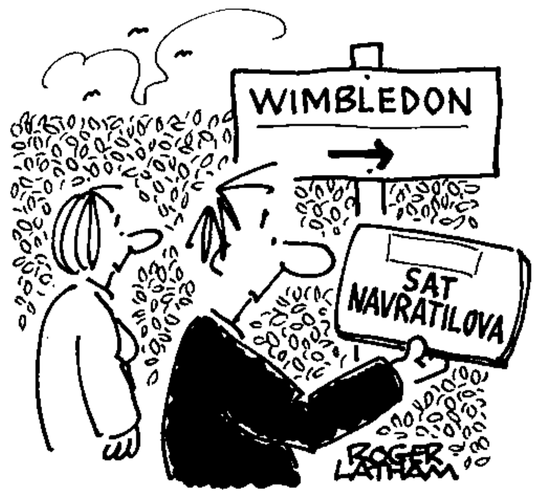
Goodbye to Blair – but more importantly to me!

You will be sad to hear that this is my final Bighead column in the Times. From now on I'm going to be a roving Bighead, penning a few clever pieces, writing a very clever book and doing the odd spot of extremely clever broadcasting.

It's what I call rather cleverly a portfolio existence. And of course I'll be spending more time with my children Brainella (7) and Intelligencia (3) as they go to university and complete their PhDs in Advanced Cleverology.

But as I leave I know the thing I shall miss most is *you* – the readers who have constantly surprised me by being clever enough to understand my articles. It's not an easy read, the Bighead column, but from my postbag it's quite clear that a few of you are almost as clever as me! So farewell – or, as they say in journalism, "Please, please, please take voluntary redundancy, Mary Ann."

© *Blairy Ann Bighead*



POETRY CORNER

Lines Written On The Retirement Of Mr Michael Aspel As Presenter Of The Antiques Roadshow

So. Farewell then
Michael Aspel.

You have been
Asked to leave
The Antiques Roadshow

Because you are now
So old that you
Have become
An antique yourself.

But you are not worth
Enough to be
On the
Show.

E.J. Thribb
(still 17½, so I can't be sacked!)

HMV Dog Photoshoot Out-takes

Appalled over a lack of good grammer

I AM appalled at the lack of good grammar in some publications these days, eg misplaced (or even missed out) prepositions.

Letter to Sheffield Star

News In Brief

MAN MIGHT BE GETTING BACK TOGETHER WITH GIRLFRIEND OR, THERE AGAIN, MIGHT NOT

STUNNING news emerged last night that a 25-year-old man and his ex-girlfriend are considering getting back together.

A source close to the ex-couple said, "Apparently he's, like, really up for seeing her again, but there again Portia, who's my best friend, reckons there's no way in a million years that they'll... *(cont. p. 94)*

WEALTHY BLONDE WOMAN SAYS PRISON ISN'T NICE

THERE WAS shock worldwide today as a blonde woman revealed that prison isn't nice.

"This has totally changed our vision of prison as a jolly friendly place full of happy singing prisoners and jolly prison guards," said everybody.

TEENAGER ISN'T STABBED TO DEATH

SHOCKING news emerged last night when police announced that a teenager hadn't been stabbed to death in the UK within the last 24 hours.

A police spokesman said, "I must admit even the most hardened officers are today shocked by the fact that a youngster hasn't died in a horribly violent crime such as that which didn't occur."

ENTERTAINMENT NEWS

SECOND series of Zimbabwe's version of "Who Wants To Be A Zillionaire?" has been shelved due to lack of public interest.

DIARY

THE HITCHENS BROTHERS ANSWER ALL THE BIG QUESTIONS

WHO KILLED COCK ROBIN?

Christopher: I know what people all over the world are saying. They're saying it was me. Well, it wasn't, and anyone who – burp! – thinks it was quite frankly needs their brain examined and their teeth bloody well kicked in. But I know who it was, if you're interested. I've gone into this whole question very very thoroughly. It was Mother Teresa, formerly of Calcutta. It's how that particular dame got her kicks.

Peter: Fact. It was The Beatles. End of argument.

ONE PLUS ONE EQUALS – WHAT?

Peter: Lets make no bones about it. The political classes have been up to their old tricks pulling the wool over our collective eyes over this one for in my opinion far too long. If we're being honest, everyone knows in their heart of hearts that one plus one equals five. Not four. Not six. But five. You know it. I know it. We all know it. But these days our country – or what is left of it – is so over-run by the demands of political correctness that no-one has the guts to say it. It's as simple as that.

Christopher: That is a truly preposterous position for any one to take. If someone comes up to me and says, "1 plus 1 equals five", then what I say is this. "You have a screw loose. You can't add up. And not only that, but you are a blithering imbecile, a horrible, repulsive human being who can't comprehend the foggiest thing about simple mathematics. So why not just piss the fuck off?"

You see, it's a complex issue, and only an utter moron would simplify it. All the acknowledged experts in the field now agree that there is only one answer to the question "What does one plus one equal?" and that is "Three-and-a-half". And it anyone doesn't like it, they can kiss my ass.

Peter: Let's not dignify that ill-considered tirade as an answer. Unlike my brother, I have spent a lot of time in this country, listening to what ordinary, decent people think. Nurses, doctors, policemen, builders – any of whom, incidentally, would be delighted to press the button on the electric chair, though, since you ask, I think hanging is the better option. And what they have told me is that one plus one definitely equals five. It's common sense. The belief that one plus one equals three-and-a-half is held only by the self-satisfied liberal social and political elite, the majority of whom are homosexual, and to whom my brother is, for reasons of his own a grovelling maidservant.

Christopher: Actually, Peter, your position is fantastically helpful to – burp! – me because it shows that, along with most if not all the other highly distinguished minds on the international stage, I remain a firm and considered advocate of change. With respect, tedious stuck-in-the-mud conservatives with vegetables for brains such as your own good self remain committed to the lunacy that one plus one equals five, while the rest of us know that this flies in the face of reason, and we will never surrender our belief – no, our knowledge – that it equals three and a half.

HOW LONG IS A PIECE OF STRING?

Christopher: Much, much longer than they'd have us believe. Those establishment wankers should be thoroughly ashamed of themselves for – burp! – their concerted campaign to defraud us into thinking otherwise.

Peter: The truth is that there isn't a piece of string. It's been snatched from decent, law-abiding middle-class people and buried underground without dignity by the liberal zealots who rule us with their iron grip. Yes, it's as simple as that.

DO YOU KNOW THE WAY TO SAN JOSE?

Peter: There's no question about it. We would all know the way to San Jose if the dictatorship of Brussels, to which we are all slaves, was not hell-bent on keeping the answer under lock and key. So why don't the powers-that-be want responsible, middle-class people to know the way to San Jose? I'll tell you. It's because they're literally terrified of the consequences of allowing people to experience freedom. These zealots are fanatical about tearing up the route-map to the area. They want to keep responsible parents in the dark whilst letting paedophiles, single mothers and homosexuals run riot. It's as simple as that.

Christopher: I've been wrestling with this question for over three decades now, so you've come to the right person. May I refer you to my book "The Whole San Jose Question", which I wrote in the early 1970s, and in which I argue that only a wholesale invasion of the San Jose area by Soviet forces will ever clear up the problem, and also to my more recent definitive work, "The Only Fucking Way to San Jose" (2004), in which, contrary to what my fascist critics have suggested, I demonstrate my consistent opposition to any – burp! – sort of armed foreign intervention in the issue.

WHY DID THE CHICKEN CROSS THE ROAD?

Peter: I have nothing against chickens. They have a perfect right to cluck, and even to lay eggs, just so long as they obey the rule of law. But let's get this in perspective. No chicken should be allowed to cross any road, at any time. It's common sense. As a race – if I may use that term – chickens have no knowledge or understanding of the Highway Code. Nor should they be allowed to drive, as a lot of pro-chicken zealots are urging. There is no reason why they should not be permitted to jeopardise their own lives. But why should they be allowed to kill tens of thousands of ordinary, decent Britons every year?

Christopher: Sorry, chum, but that's a logical non-starter of the most pathetic and imbecilic variety. If you have studied the findings of all the international chicken experts, as I have, over many years, and, may I add, across many continents, then you will know that chickens are in fact highly proficient in the art of crossing roads, in fact infinitely better than human – burp! – beings in that capacity. I have often walked across roads with chickens and I have always found them to be painstakingly thoughtful to motorists and pedestrians alike. Why did the chicken cross the road? Because he had read my recent book "God, Chickens and Iraq" and knew it made sense. So fuck off, the lot of you. Burp!

As told to

CRAIG BROWN

HOW'S THE SMOKING BAN HERE IN THE U.K. FOR YOU, GARY?
AS SOMEONE WHO ENJOYS A SMOKE AND A PUFF, I WASN'T LOOKING FORWARD TO IT...
YOU CAN SMOKE AT HOME BUT YOU CAN'T SMOKE IN ENCLOSED PUBLIC SPACES AND I LIKE TO SMOKE WHEN I'M OUT DRINKING WITH MY MATES!
BUT SO FAR I'VE HAD NO PROBLEM WITH THE BAN AT ALL, TOUCH WOOD.
RIGHT.
TAP TAP
I KNEW HAVING MY OWN PRIVATE PUB AT HOME WOULD COME IN HANDY ONE DAY...
OH I SEE. COOL.
CLICK
TAP

Literary Review

Cult friction

After Dark
Haruki Murakami
(Harvill Secker, £14.99)

Exterior: night, the city. Interior: a café

A Japanese girl sits reading a Chinese book, her coffee untasted, her cigarette unsmoked. Enter a young man, toting a trombone. Can he sit down? They exchange banalities. It seems he once dated her sister. He eats his chicken salad before going off again, to his group's rehearsal in a nearby basement.

Later a woman bursts in. She's a friend of the trombone player. She asks if the girl can help interpret what's happened to a Chinese prostitute who's been beaten up by a client in the "love hotel" where the woman works.

"The world," says someone, "is a pretty scary place now."

Meanwhile, in another part of the city…

A girl lies sleeping. She is the sister of the girl in the café, the one who dated the trombonist? She sleeps the sleep of the comatose, though she is not in a coma. It is an intentional (you could almost say "conscious") refusal to waken, a kind of sleeping disorder, like an eating disorder, born of damaged self-esteem. Perhaps. Everything is a bit perhapsy in this novel. We are looking at everything "like a camera", though the purity of this rather hackneyed structural device is frequently corrupted by resort to interior monologue, descriptions of people's feelings, etc. Viewed through the camera-narrator, events have a random disjunctive quality, but are presented in such a way as to imply the possibility of connectedness. Er, that sort of thing.

There's a TV in the room. Though not plugged in, it still fizzes and stutters to life, showing images of the sleeping girl and of a faceless man watching her. *We are all voyeurs, don't you know.* Later the girl can be seen only in the TV, as though she's been sucked in there, as though she only exists there. Then she comes back out again. We never know who the man is. "It is," someone says, "the right time of day for ghosts." Coo!

Back to the café...

The trombonist is taking a break from his rehearsal. The girl, back from helping out at the love hotel, talks about her sleeping sister. They go to a park and feed the stray cats.

Meanwhile the gang-master of the prostitute rides around on his big black motorbike, looking for the client who beat her up. He threatens violence but his threats miscarry. The wrong people pick up the victim's lost phone to hear his sinister declarations that "no matter how far you run, we are going to get you".

The client himself certainly never hears it. He goes home after working out in his deserted office, nursing the hand bruised by his encounter with the prostitute, whose money and clothes he has stolen, and whose phone he has left in an all-night convenience store. As dawn breaks he is watching TV in the kitchen.

Watching, waiting, sleeping, waking...

Just another night in the city. So what? Who cares?

Another café, another city, far away…

A foreign man writes in his notebook:

"Murakami is Japan's favourite literary export, a cult novelist of establishment status, which means (a) serious reviewers compare him to Mishima, and speak of "alienation"; (b) trendy reviewers, aware of his zeitgeisty credentials, compare him to Auster and Coupland; (c) lazy reviewers just go on about how weird it all is, how subtle, how inscrutable, how curiously different and yet how westernly accessible.

But what is the point of it? More than one reviewer has called it a "mood" piece. Others aim for the "film noir" pigeonhole. Basically it's all style and no substance. If you like this sort of thing, then this is the sort of thing you'll like. For the rest of us, it's inscrutably boring, actually. Still, it looks good on the café table (the book I mean), with its cover shot of a naked lady (courtesy of Araki, the Barbican art gallery's favourite Japanese pornographer)."

Books & Bookmen

■ WATERSTONE's was reeling after details of its ludicrously overpriced Christmas ratecard (£25,000 to £45,000 to display a book at the front of its stores, etc) found their way into last issue's Bookworm, national newspapers and the media.

MD Gerry Johnson was particularly incensed as he thought he had killed the story a week earlier by threatening the trade press with sanctions – a regular Waterstone's ploy when someone wants to run a negative story about it.

His henchmen are now trying to find the source of the leak, assuming it to be just one disgruntled publisher. But Bookworm can reveal that bookish types were falling over themselves to reveal details of the crazy fees.

A Waterstone's spokesperson defended the high charges claiming booksellers genuinely selected the best books and that: "It's only after that that we enter into a confidential commercial agreement with the publishers to decide how best to feature and promote these titles."

Really? What he neglected to say was that the charges are set *before* any books are selected at all and that if a publisher refuses to pay up, it will quickly see its title removed from any promotional plans.

As a result of the fees, a boycott of the Waterstone's Christmas promotion looks likely with a number of publishers refusing to submit any books for inclusion. Others are putting forward just a token selection of titles, believing the chain will end up having to give away slots for free.

■ "NOW I have read an entertaining little book called *She Literally Exploded: The Daily Telegraph Infuriating Phrasebook*, noted Dot Wordsworth in the Mind Your Language column in the *Spectator* recently.

"It is by Christopher Howse, who used to work for the *Spectator*, and Richard Preston… I found myself laughing in recognition at ordinarily irritating phrases such as not a problem, pan-fried, doing nothing is not an option, step up to the plate, take on board, and, a sure sign that inspiration is flagging: the list is endless."

Several readers also found themselves laughing in recognition of the fact that Dot Wordsworth is the *nom de plume* of none other than… Christopher Howse.

'Bookworm'

LUVVIES

"When you get on stage and you sweat, that's real work – balls in your hand, you need stamina, energy, courage... Sometimes you feel you have reached the sublime, touched God."

STEVEN BERKOFF
The Times

Submitted by Elaine Darkin.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

THEATRE NEWS

STAGE luvvies sometimes drone on about "the late, lamented" Jack Tinker, long-serving theatre critic of the *Daily Mail*, the latest to indulge this habit being *Sunday Times* hack AA Gill.

Gill held up Tinker as an example to the crop of wastrels and tramps who currently form the Critics' Circle. But how reliable and objective was Jack Tinker in reality?

Actor Michael Simkins, writing in a West End publication called *Theatre Extra*, has just admitted that in the mid-1980s the "late, lamented" Tinker frequently raved about him in reviews. Was this because the handsome Simkins was a great tragedian? Was it for his unmatched comic timing? Er, not necessarily.

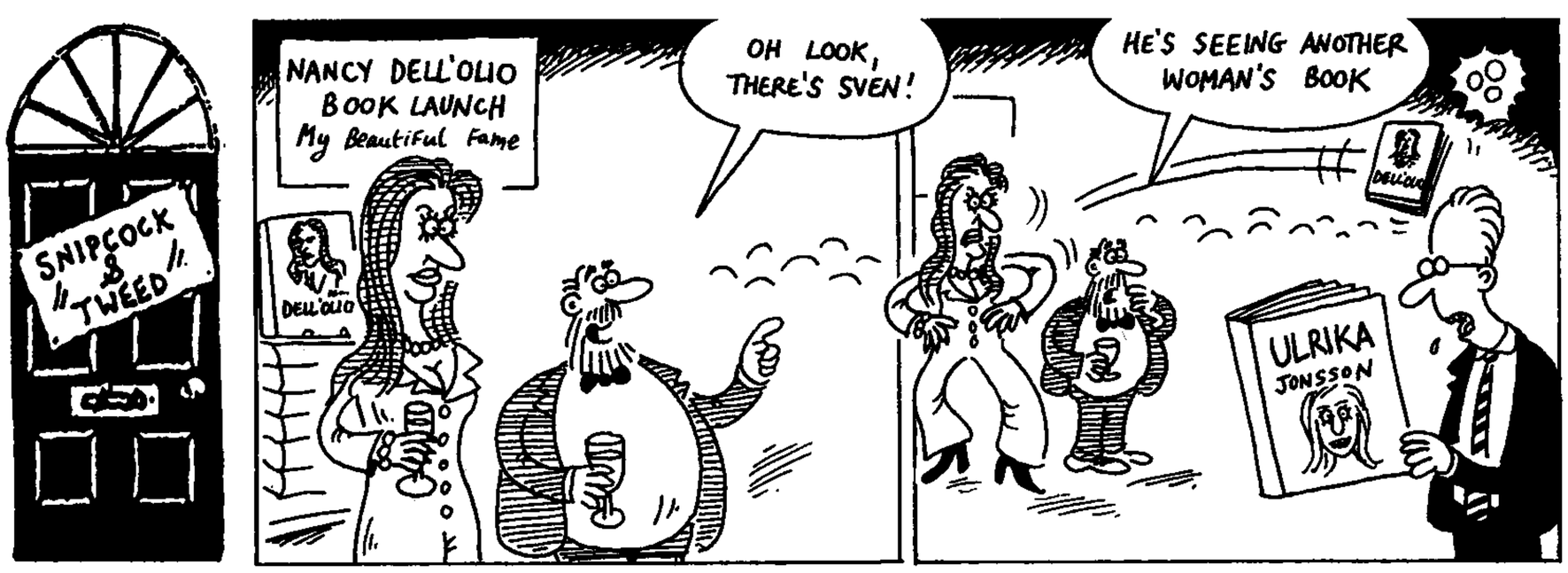
"At the time I lived in the room above his old mum, Lily," writes Simkins. "Several times I'd helped her restore a faulty ballcock in the toilet cistern which was threatening to flood her basement flat. Perhaps Jack was repaying her debt of gratitude."

Moral for aspiring actors? Find yourself a bedsit above a critic's ancient mum and fix her bog…

GILL'S broadside in the *Sunday Times* left most of the critics unfazed; but ageing troubadour Michael Coveney, another ex-*Daily Mail* critic, leapt to the defence of his comrades.

Gill "looks like a homosexual male model and certainly talks and walks like one," thundered Coveney on the Whatsonstage.com website where he is now reduced to hawking his wares.

Coveney, married to stern theatre PR Sue Hyman, perhaps quickly realised his remarks could be construed as ragingly homophobic. The following day a version of the gay Aids play *Angels in America* opened at the Lyric Hammersmith. The seven-hour production received pretty mixed reviews. But one critic, keen not to be thought anti-gay, awarded it a rare top rating of five stars. His name? Michael Coveney!



Pseuds Corner

If we ask superficial questions such as 'Do you like the logo?', we should expect superficial answers. Logos are tips of the brand iceberg, the cherry on the brand cake, and we must move the debate on by asking 'Do you like the brand experience?' instead.

Let's look again at the question, if forced to comment on the cherry. Is it a beautiful logo? I would suggest no, but it is certainly different and will engage the intended audience.

Now let's reframe the question beyond the logo. Is it an interesting piece of branding? Yes, it suggests an exciting brand experience.

PETER KNAPP
Branding News

4.30 pm Debi Withers will be leading you through a collective lesbian rebirth journey as she takes you, by the hand, through the epic movement of Kate Bush's '9th wave.' The journey takes a humorous look at heteronormative socialisation, feminist and lesbian critical theory. No previous experience is necessary & all are welcome.

'A weekend of thinking and acting' at the Serpentine Gallery

This is a fragrant wine, the aroma fluttering above the meniscus like a butterfly above a bed of flowers. Personally, I preferred the Nelson's Creek, a dry, crisp, mineral-rich wine with all the character required to stand up to Bartok's Bluebeard's Castle, brilliantly conducted by Marin Alsop this past week on Radio 3.

ROGER SCRUTON
New Statesman

It wasn't the first time I'd seen the White Stripes play; they had long ranked in my personal holy trinity of rock bands, along with the Velvet Underground and Pixies – bands that work my nervous system before my brain. But that night was different. The show seemed to rear up like some long-dormant monster, all sharp spine and teeth, awakening with a roar of Dead Leaves and the Dirty Ground, Ball and Biscuit, Black Math and Boll Weevil...All the way home – as I walked the dark streets of Hackney, stood awestruck, ears ringing, in my kitchen, lay in bed entirely unable to sleep – I felt there was a phoenix rising in my belly...That January evening at Alexandra Palace shook me into the realisation that I was not really living but meekly existing, that there was nothing else in my life at that time that could match how fiercely alive I felt in that hot, cramped concert hall. I felt simultaneously remonstrated [sic] and inspired.

LAURA BARTON
Guardian

CONTRIBUTORS: Everyone, Anon, Joe Hickey, Caroline Barton.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

LOCKERBIE APPEAL

The heels of justice

A FULL six years after Abdelbas set Ali Mohamed al-Megrahi was convicted on the flimsiest circumstantial evidence of murdering the 270 people who perished in the Lockerbie bombing, the Libyan is finally to be allowed a second appeal.

Three years after it started its inquiry, and after producing 800 pages of reasons and 13 volumes of appendices, the Scottish Criminal Cases Review Commission (SCCRC) has come up with six grounds for concluding that Magrahi is the victim of a miscarriage of justice.

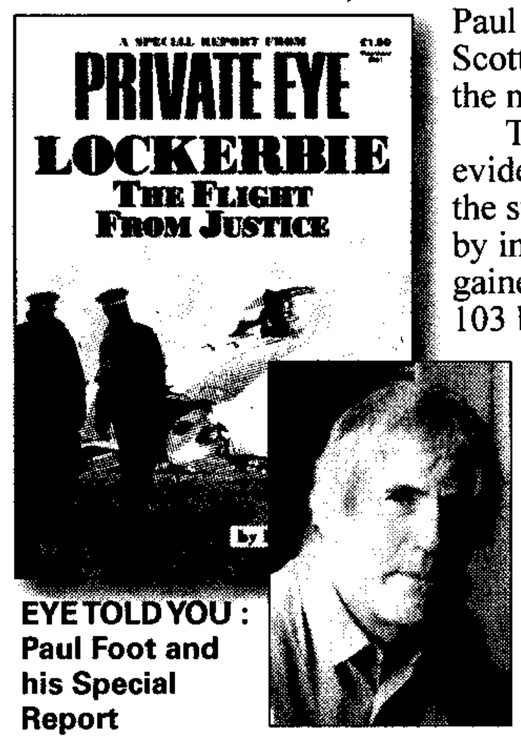
The commission might have done better to read the late Paul Foot's 32-page special report on Lockerbie, *The Flight From Justice*, published by the *Eye* in the summer of 2001, shortly after Megrahi's specially convened, no-jury trial in the Netherlands. For central to the commission's findings is evidence that undermines the central thrust of the prosecution case against Megrahi: his identification by Maltese shopkeeper Tony Gauci as the man who bought 13 items of clothing that were used to disguise the bomb that blew up Pan Am 103 after it left Heathrow.

The SCCRC said Mr Gauci had been shown a picture of Megrahi in an article linking him to the bombing days before he picked him out on an identity parade. The commission also said that for the purchaser to have been Megrahi, he would have had to buy the clothes on 7 December when he was indeed in Malta. But it claimed that new evidence about when the Christmas lights were turned on in the town indicated that the clothes must have been bought earlier because Mr Gauci has always maintained that the man who bought the clothes did so *before* the Christmas lights were turned on.

As *Eye* readers will be aware, Paul Foot highlighted these inconsistencies – and many others – in Mr Gauci's evidence six years ago. After all, Mr Gauci's "identification" came 11 years after the event and completely contradicted his original description of a man much older and taller than Megrahi.

While it may be that, as the commission found, other material casting doubt on Mr Gauci's reliability was hidden from Megrahi's defence at trial, there was more than enough to conclude, as Paul Foot did all those years ago, that Scottish justice had been "defaced" in the most outrageous fashion.

There was also more than enough evidence to suggest, as Foot did, that the sudden switch of attention to Libya by investigators (who had already gained evidence linking the Pan Am 103 bomb to Syrian-based terrorists, hired by Iranians to avenge the shooting down of an Iranian civil airliner by the US) was nothing more than political expediency. The US, after all, needed Syrian support for an attack on Saddam Hussein's occupying forces in Kuwait.



EYE TOLD YOU : Paul Foot and his Special Report

Megrahi and his original co-accused, Al-Amin Khalifah Fhimah, who was acquitted by the Scottish judges, were put in the frame by a "Libyan defector" who was handsomely rewarded by the CIA.

PS: The Criminal Cases Review Commission in England has also caught up with the *Eye*, which in 2001 raised a series of questions over the conviction of Barry George for the murder of Jill Dando. Last month it referred George's case back to the appeal court, claiming that the prosecution overstated the importance of the tell-tale spec of gunshot residue in his coat pocket, when its own expert had warned it was "inconclusive" and could have originated from millions of other cartridges. Another case of *Eye* told you so?

GOVERNMENT WASTE

Who's an audit boy?

DOCUMENTS submitted to parliament's inquiry into the travel arrangements of National Audit Office head Sir John Bourn and his wife reveal that the cost of Lady Bourn's travel constituted "benefits in kind" worth £190,000 over the last five years. Yet none of this was disclosed in the NAO's accounts, in clear breach of accounting rules.

In a briefing for a special Public Accounts Commission hearing on 13 June the NAO admitted that it paid £25,000 a year for Lady Bourn to accompany Sir John on 24 international trips since 2004, and that these amounts were benefits – contrary to previous indications of a stricter business purpose ("Lady Bourn attends where necessary to meet the expectations of the host...") The NAO (ie taxpayers) then met the £22,000 a year tax bills on the perks.

The justification for this is Cabinet Office guidance which in "exceptional" circumstances allows civil servants' spouses' travel costs and any resulting tax bills to be paid from public money. Conditions for this include ensuring that "subsistence expenses are kept to a minimum" and "journeys should be made as economically as possible" – which, as the *Eye* has documented, is hardly the Bourns' style. Sir John justifies the £400 per night hotels he stays in with his wife on the grounds that he is *not* a civil servant and so not subject to Whitehall spending limits (around a quarter that). But, cherry-picking the rule-book, he's happy to treat himself as a mandarin when it saves tax.

The NAO's 2006 accounts state that "the amount paid in respect of the Comptroller and Auditor General's remuneration was £155,404". No mention of the benefits, running at more than £45,000 for each of the last three years, which were thus concealed from public view. As the NAO is required to follow standard accounting rules, that is a material omission. The NAO admitted to the *Eye* that following our revelations its audit committee had looked at the issue and accepted the benefits should be reported. Why didn't the NAO's own auditors, Haines Watts, pick it up? They wouldn't comment. Such an accountancy blunder might be one for the regulators, led by the Professional Oversight Board – which happens to be chaired by Sir John Bourn!

The inquest into Bourn's conduct was a textbook whitewash. The evidence that he received undeclared benefits was kept secret until after the Public Accounts Commission had pronounced, on the basis of a private memo from the NAO, that there was "no financial impropriety". Nobody had a chance to point out that the NAO's accounts were false as a result of the perks, nor that the justification for paying the Bourns' extravagant travel and tax bills was contrived, to say the least, nor to challenge an exaggerated claim about the importance of income brought in by overseas work.

The man charged with auditing £500bn of government spending every year and preventing waste has now signed accounts for his own organisation which, as the beneficiary of the perks, he must have known were false – as well as having blown taxpayers' cash on luxury for himself and his wife. But he can carry on regardless... with parliament's seal of approval.

CHAGOS ISLANDS

Far from home

THE hundreds of families exiled from the Chagos Archipelago since the 1960s still can't start packing to go home yet as the Foreign Office has filed yet another appeal against their latest legal victory.

The court of appeal ruled in May that the islanders should be allowed to return immediately to the British Indian Ocean Territory – although not to the largest island, Diego Garcia (pictured), which is still leased to the US as a military base.

The Chagossians have been down this road before (*Eyes passim*): the high court ruled that they could reclaim their home in 2000 and the then Foreign Secretary Robin Cook said there would be no further appeal. But after the Americans claimed that their return would threaten security at the base, the government used an "Order in Council" under the royal prerogative to overturn the court's decision.

At May's hearing, Lord Justice Sedley said the tactic had been unlawful and an "abuse of power" by the government. Undaunted, on 24 June the Foreign Office lodged another appeal to the House of Lords.

PS: Why doesn't the US want the Chagossians anywhere near their base? Despite years of denial from the UK government, the Council of Europe concluded last month that there was indeed a secret CIA detention centre at Diego Garcia, where terrorist suspects were taken on extraordinary rendition flights.

AIRLINE SAFETY

Fuming mad

THE BBC's recent investigation into pilot fatigue and the threat to airline safety reported the scale of the problem – some 80 percent of pilots said they had been seriously affected – but offered little by way of explanation. The fatigued pilots, it emerged, were not generally exceeding their tightly regulated flying hours.

Nor did the BBC report mention two investigations announced the previous week into what many believe is a cause of extreme fatigue and other symptoms that pose a threat to pilots and passengers alike: the leaking of highly toxic fumes into the cabin (*Eyes passim*).

The House of Lords select committee on science and technology is to look at the issue as part of a wider study into air safety. At the same time 1,500 pilots will take part in a detailed clinical study to see how big the problem maybe.

A year ago the *Eye* reported how a small study of 27 pilots had found "alarming" cognitive failures after prolonged exposure to polluted air in cockpit and cabins. Most had been flying BAe 146s or Boeing 757s (pictured), believed to be the worst for engine leaks which cause air contaminated with toxic organophosphates to be pumped into the craft.

As well as suffering extreme fatigue, dizziness, headaches and memory loss, some reported mixing up, or being unable to retain, vital numerical data about altitude, speed and direction provided by air

traffic control. Dr Sarah Mackenzie Ross, a consultant clinical neuro-psychologist from University College London, also found high levels of a range of volatile organic compounds, such as benzene and toluene, in their blood and body fats. Nickel was found in all B757 pilots.

From her other research, she estimated that nearly 200,000 passengers on UK flights in 2004 were exposed to noxious fumes. Yet despite concerns being raised around the globe (*Eye* readers know the issue first surfaced in Australia back in 2000), the airline industry has been reluctant to admit that there is a problem. It argues that any organophosphates entering aircraft are in such small doses as to be insignificant.

But last month pilots who believe their health has been badly affected launched a new pressure group, the Aerotoxic Association, to campaign over the issue. It revealed that reports of leaks in UK aircraft were running at a record high.

The association already has the backing of more than 100 MPs who signed an early-day motion calling for more research and better filtration on flights. The MPs believe passengers should be told if they have been exposed to contaminated air on a flight.

WATERWORLD

Wild West

WHILE South West Water (SWW) customers pay the country's highest water bills, the company blames the expense on having to pay so much on, among other things, improving water quality around the coastline.

The huge bills are especially galling for those Exeter residents who last year were supplied with drinking water contaminated with… diesel.

Last month the company pleaded guilty at Honiton Magistrates' Court to supplying water unfit for human consumption to 3,000 homes in several areas of the city. An investigation discovered that a drum of red diesel had been mistakenly added at a reservoir by water company staff.

The company was fined £5,000 on four specimen counts, totalling £20,000, plus costs. But this hasn't affected profits. SWW's parent company, Pennon, announced a £131m annual profit in June, an 18 percent rise on last year. No doubt customers in the South West were delighted to learn that water bills are being hiked by 16 percent this year.

DEFENCE

Fly in the ointment

MPs on the defence select committee discovered last month how the £13bn "future strategic tanker aircraft" (FSTA) for in-flight fighter re-fuelling was woefully behind schedule.

The FSTA was first mooted in 1997. It took the best part of eight years to announce the lucky winners of the deal: a consortium of EADS, Thales, Cobham and Rolls Royce. But the problems were only just beginning. Agreeing a 30-year PFI contract under which the consortium will own the aircraft and lease them to the RAF when required, has proved tricky, to say the least, and negotiations rumble on. The latest estimate is that nothing useful will emerge until 2011.

Pressed by MPs, government officials stuck to their pro-PFI script. But one of the businessmen, Francisco Ferdinand Sainz of EADS, let the cat out of the bag when the committee's Tory chairman James Arbuthnot asked whether PFI was "expensive in terms of money or in terms of time? Has it added to the delay?"

"All things," replied Sainz unhesitatingly.

Sainz knows what he is talking about, having delivered similar equipment for the Australian Air Force without using PFI. His contrast was devastating: "I can give you the example of Australia: in three years, we went from the proposal to seeing the contract: a similar aircraft; a similar type of product." On PFI, he said it all: "It is good business for banks and lawyers, that is for sure."

THE CURSE OF GNOME

End of Empire?

THE curse of Gnome strikes in Ilford, as the £100m "Pioneer Point" skyscraper planned on the site of the old Pioneer market remains just expensive wasteland 16 months after the ground was cleared.

By now several of the 33 storeys should be visible, but nothing has appeared. Except, that is, the *Eye's* exposure of the murky past of the man behind it at Empire Property Group.

On a previous deal unconnected with Empire, Tom O'Donnell, who styled himself Empire's chief executive officer, had channelled thousands of pounds offshore before flying to the Isle of Man to pick up wads of cash. For Pioneer Point he claimed to have dreamt up a scheme that would "fuck the taxman".

Unsurprisingly the bankers now have cold feet, Empire's PR people admit. Even Redbridge council, whose beaming leader Allan Weinberg once declared "this landmark project demonstrates our ability to deliver regeneration", appears to be losing patience. "The developer has given various assurances about preparing to begin construction and we look forward to seeing a start on site in due course," was their terse statement on the matter.

Empire insists O'Donnell is completely off the scene and the firm is squeaky clean. Yet he is now touting himself as managing director of a firm called Hifab Agora, which coincidentally Empire continues to boast of as a "partner". The bankers aren't likely to be getting their chequebooks out any time soon.

What a banker

IN THE last *Eye* we reported how dodgy "land banker" Andrew Smith had been declared bankrupt at Barnstaple county court, the hearing making it highly unlikely that any of the hundreds of clients who invested in virtually worthless "self-build" plots with Smith's companies UPA and ILS (*Eyes passim*) will ever get their money back.

Also out of pocket are a number of young couples who had booked wedding receptions at another of Smith's enterprises, the Lenwood Country Club at Bideford, North Devon, which has ceased trading.

Tammy Langton and Andy Keen from Appledore were due to hold a reception for 180 guests at the club on 7 July. Smith is still holding their £200 deposit and his manager, Alan Alexander, asked Mr Keen for the balance in the same week as Smith's bankruptcy hearing. Luckily Mr Keen did not have his credit card on him.

Newlyweds Adam and Emma Sinclair, who married last month in Hawaii, were due to have a wedding party at the Lenwood on 23 June, and had already paid £1,285. Adam told the *North Devon Journal*: "While we were away our friends heard rumours they were closing. They went to see Mr Alexander and he told them there were no problems, it was all going ahead."

CELL MURDER

A sorry tale

THREE years after Shahid Aziz was found in his cell at Leeds Prison beaten, kicked, strangled and with a razor blade embedded in his neck, his widow, Parveen Khan, has finally received a written apology from the head of the Prison Service, Phil Wheatley.

Mr Aziz, a father of two, had been in the cell for less than an hour when he was attacked from behind by Peter McCann. He suffered 13 separate injuries, including a broken jaw and head lacerations, as well as two fatal neck wounds.

As the jury at the inquest into Mr Aziz's death heard, McCann was known to be volatile and violent and should never have been placed in a cell with anyone. The day before he attacked Mr Aziz, a probation officer had telephoned the jail to warn managers that McCann was so dangerous she feared he would attack other inmates. (He had previously attacked one with a mallet and another with a makeshift knife only weeks earlier in Leeds Prison).

But no one acted on the information and McCann was not searched, so his knife – three razor blades inserted into a toothbrush – was undetected when he was put in a cell with Mr Aziz.

Shahid Aziz with his wife Parveen and children

Though records show that McCann had been involved in eight violent incidents, four against other inmates, the jail's system for assessing risk was almost non-existent, the inquest heard. The jury's narrative verdict highlighted a series of blunders by the Prison Service. These included failing to act on the probation officer's warning; having poorly trained staff; failing to check McCann's criminal record or carry out a proper cell risk assessment; and generally lacking the resources to care properly for inmates in an overcrowded jail.

In the apology to Mrs Aziz, Mr Wheatley said he promised to learn from the mistakes "so that Leeds and others are better able to protect prisoners from harm in the future". But it was the Prison Service's failure to learn from two very similar cell murders that led to Mr Aziz's death in the first place.

The Prison Service failed to take heed of the killing in 2000 of Zahid Mubarek by a known racist at Feltham Young Offenders' Institution (*Eyes passim*). And six months before McCann killed Mr Aziz in April 2004, Stephen Shaw, the prisons ombudsman, identified an almost identical set of failings in a cell murder at Manchester Prison.

In a 60-page report into the death of 37-year-old Anthony Hesketh, who was shortly to be released from a four-month sentence for driving offences when he was strangled by a cell mate with a severe personality disorder and a long history of violence, Mr Shaw made a series of recommendations to improve the systems for identifying prisoners who pose a risk, including better record checks, better screening and improving the flow of information from probation and other services to the jail.

When Mr Shaw then investigated Mr Aziz's death, he was concerned that his calls for an immediate review of risk assessment and better liaison between prisons and other agencies had not been acted upon. At Leeds, it seems, there was little excuse. One of the senior prison staff who helped him investigate the death of Mr Hesketh was none other than Stacey Tasker, the then governor of... Leeds Prison.

CUSTODY DEATH

Insult to injury

THE parents of Paul Day, (pictured) whose death in custody exposed serious weakness at the Prison Service and prompted changes to prison rules (*Eyes* 1173 and 1775), are being forced back to court because the government is refusing to pay their legal costs.

Andrew and Pauline Day endured a five-week inquest after their son Paul, a 31-year-old police and prison informant, was found hanging in his cell in the segregation unit of Frankland prison, Durham, on 2 October 2002. The inquest jury concluded that he was driven to kill himself because prison staff did nothing to stop other prisoners abusing him, and because of other systemic failures in his care.

In January, prisons minister Gerry Sutcliffe told Mr and Mrs Day that the Prison Service had "made a number of changes to policy and practice in direct response to Paul's death".

Following the inquest, the Days sued the government under the Human Rights Act and received an out-of-court settlement of £40,000, plus costs. However, they have now been presented with a detailed challenge of their £140,000 legal bill.

Treasury solicitors are objecting to the Days' use of a London-based barrister for the inquest (even though the Prison Service had one) claiming the couple should have hired a barrister who worked closer to Durham where the case was heard. They are also refusing to pay for what they say was "work in attempting to persuade the coroner to reach a particular verdict", claiming they will cover "only costs which relate to... taking of notes". They also complain that "there appears to have been an absence of case planning".

Bringing the civil case and preparing for the inquest stripped the Days of their life savings and forced them into debt. "Not only have we lost our son, but for a considerable amount of time we have been more or less destitute," say the couple. "The money the government must have spent on the inquest is astronomical – they had a barrister and at least two solicitors there every day, plus senior managers from the Prison Service. For them to quibble over our costs when they have been found to be so much at fault is simply disgusting."

BLANTYRE HOUSE

Getting away with Murtagh

NO ONE involved in the Blantyre House saga, a botched SAS-style raid in May 2000 on one of the country's best performing jails, can have missed the irony in the title of the new book by Tom Murtagh, the man behind the operation: *The Blantyre House Prison Affair: lessons from a modern-day witch hunt.*

Murtagh wasn't referring to the unprecedented expulsion, demotion and prolonged investigation of the jail's governor, Eoin McLellan-Murray, over unproven "intelligence" that Blantyre was awash with drugs and criminal conspiracies. He was referring to the "witch-hunt" against himself when he was a prison service area manager.

Murtagh believes he was subject of a witch-hunt because he was criticised by both the Commons home affairs select committee, which investigated the raid, and by the then chief inspector of prisons, Lord Ramsbotham. What comes over clearly in the book is that Murtagh does not like being challenged or criticised.

Much of the book is merely a re-run of the "intelligence" evidence presented to (and rejected by) the select committee to justify the heavy-handed raid. *Eye* readers will recall that after the governor had been removed, a hit squad went in smashing down the doors to the chapel and health centre, searching the entire jail and demanding that everyone take a drugs test.

Not one inmate tested positive for drugs and, despite claims to the contrary, little more than adult pornography was found. Phones, money and cameras found were all used legitimately by the inmates for their regular employment outside the resettlement prison at Goudhurst in Kent.

Murtagh's "intelligence" was that some middle managers were in the pay of inmates who were involved in drug or criminal networks. But as Lord Corbett, who as MP for Hemel Hempstead chaired the Commons committee, said: "Why then was there not one prosecution arising out of the entire sorry affair?"

There was one very interesting passage in the book, however. No doubt to set the scene for this "out of control jail", Murtagh describes how Kenneth Noye, notorious crime boss and murderer, once managed to get into Blantyre House and with others at the jail was involved in a massive credit card fraud. This, however, all happened *before* Eoin McLellan-Murray took over at the jail. In fact the governor at the time was one Brian Pollett, who was rewarded with promotion and played a key role in the raid and removal of... Mr McLellan-Murray.

The home affairs committee effectively restored McLellan-Murray's reputation as a highly praised and respected governor and exposed Murtagh as a bully. Murtagh, it seems, just wanted the last word.

IT

Hodge-podge at MoJ

SO MUCH for joined-up justice. As Jack Straw takes over at the new Ministry of Justice (MoJ), he inherits an IT project whose end is retreating rapidly over the horizon.

Last year, when the *Eye* revealed that C-NOMIS, the IT backbone for the National Offender Management Service (Noms), was far later than the Home Office would admit (*Eyes* 1166 and 1172), it already seemed as if its revised end date of 2008 was optimistic.

And so it has proved: the "end date" has now been pushed back to 2009.

C-NOMIS was supposed to "roll out" this year to prisons across the country, but so far has rolled out to precisely one – HMP Albany on the Isle of Wight. The island's two other prisons, Parkhurst and Camp Hill, are due to receive it "imminently". But they will still not receive the full system as its probation element will not be working until next year. Not bad for a system invented to "join up" all sides of the criminal justice system.

Mike Manisty, MoJ's director of offender information systems and the man in charge of C-NOMIS, told a government IT conference last month how hard it was to plug various parts of the service together, especially when dealing with the GSI, the government's secure intranet, which he called the "great corporate network rip-off".

Manisty has worked out that if he could give every single person in the criminal justice service an ordinary high street broadband internet connection it would still cost £10m less – about a third – than the current inadequate system. No wonder he is fed up. He has to run a system in a department that is at odds with itself, using the *Eye*'s favourite IT contractor, EDS, for a system the government seems determined to under-fund well into the next decade.

You can contact the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017 or email: strobes@private-eye.co.uk

In the City

THE Financial Services Authority (FSA) has begun an investigation into GE Money Home Lending (GEMHL), one of the biggest players in the increasingly troubled "sub-prime" mortgage market. The FSA wants to know if there may have been breaches of its regulations regarding responsible lending and treating customers fairly. It is also examining issues of corporate governance at the British subsidiary of one of the world's biggest companies, the US-based General Electric.

The FSA is expected to focus on allegations that GEMHL customers were charged interest on a part of original loans which was retained, usually pending a survey or repairs. In some cases the amounts retained may never have been released. More than 1,000 borrowers could have been over-charged up to £2m. The investigation is also examining allegations that GEMHL made secured loans to customers who could not afford to keep up repayments and so put their homes at risk.

The GEMHL "retentions" policy, if proved, would breach the FSA's Treating Customers Fairly (TCF) code. The FSA is pushing TCF hard in a bid to force the financial services industry to clean up its act.

The FSA investigation is an embarrassment for GE as only last January GE Capital Bank was fined £610,000 by the FSA over its selling of payment protection insurance and failing to treat customers fairly.

The FSA is concerned that aggressive or predatory lending practices in the booming "sub-prime" market could have the same dangerous impact in Britain as it has already had in the United States where more than one million mortgages are behind with payments or have defaulted with homes being repossessed. Many of these loans were made by fee-driven brokers and specialist lenders to high-risk borrowers.

The ripple effect of that crisis has already hit major "sub-prime" lenders, such as HSBC, necessitating huge provisions; and it is now beginning to wash over investors in the packages of "sub-prime" mortgages sold by Wall Street bankers. Bear Stearns had to inject up to £1.5bn to rescue two of its funds, while the London-based Queens Walk and Caliber Global funds have reported large losses.

GE's US "sub-prime" lender WMC has had to make a $700m provision on its $5bn portfolio. The FSA is liaising in its investigation with the Office of Thrift Supervision in Washington.

Regulators are particularly concerned about the amount of risky "sub-prime" mortgages packaged into derivatives called "collateral debt obligations" (CDOs) and sold to investors. Wall Street sold more than $500bn "sub-prime" backed securities in 2005, up from just $56m in 2000. They offered high returns until the bubble burst last year as interest rates and repossessions rose. Now these CDOs may be unsaleable or worth very little.

The FSA is concerned to prevent any similar crisis in Britain where "sub-prime" mortgages are estimated to represent around 10 percent of the mortgage market. Much of this relates to debt consolidation. It also wants to discourage lending practices which endanger customers' homes.

GEMHL has grown substantially since it was spun out of GE Capital Bank in 2004, based around the igroup and First National companies acquired since 2001. GEMHL is the third biggest business within GE Money – the consumer lending division of GE. Its loan book doubled last year to £6bn and it is reckoned to be lending at the rate of £1bn a quarter. The total number of loans is put at approaching 500,000. It operates mainly through brokers whose clients have low credit ratings or own homes in less desirable areas. Last year it also moved into the prime mortgage market. It also makes unsecured and "buy-to-let" loans, which are not regulated by the FSA.

The FSA began a preliminary investigation of GEMHL late last year. It carried out a detailed examination of the business in March. This was encouraged by information received from a "whistleblower" within the company who highlighted the "retentions" policy.

It is normal policy with risky "sub-prime" mortgages for lenders to retain a portion of the loan awaiting a surveyor's report confirming the valuation or repairs. The GEMHL policy was on completion of the mortgage agreement to transfer the full amount of the loan to one of two law firms who handle all its business of this kind and also act for the borrower. The borrower was immediately charged interest on the full amount – even though they had not received it. This continued even if the retained amount was never released.

So in many instances, it was claimed, interest was charged on money that had not been received, capital repayments made against amounts never released and early repayment charges calculated against higher amounts than were owed. This policy may have been in existence since 2001. But while borrowers lost out, GEMHL was boosting its profits from the extra interest payments.

The FSA was told by the GEMHL insider that the majority of these retentions were never paid. Most were forgotten about or never understood by borrowers. The amounts involved were said to run into millions of pounds. Customers were only compensated if they complained.

GEMHL denied these allegations but admitted to the FSA that there had been more than 1,000 such over-charging incidents and that the amount of overpaid interest could be up to £2m. It has insisted that this was inadvertent and caused by administrative errors and that most of the existing customers have since been compensated. However, it also admitted that the retentions policy could have contributed to a number of borrowers losing their homes.

It ended the controversial "retentions" policy on secured loans last year, but the FSA suspects the company may have continued to use the same policy with its unsecured and "buy-to-let" loans.

The FSA concern about poor lending policies was increased by allegations of unsuitable loans to vulnerable borrowers who self certified their income but who might not be able to repay and so could lose their homes. One loan was said to have been made to a 69-year-old woman in Wales who was on state benefits. Monthly repayments equaled almost 100 percent of her income. There were other alleged examples of retirement age borrowers who had been made £100,000-plus loans over 10 or 15 years on an interest-only basis.

GEMHL has insisted to the FSA that it has not behaved improperly or in breach of FSA regulations.

The FSA said it could not comment on what companies it was investigating.

A GEMHL spokesman said: "We would never discuss or disclose any dialogue we have with a regulator. It would be inappropriate. There is an ongoing dialogue with regulators. We are not willing to comment on speculation regarding any dialogue with the FSA."

THE late Sir James Goldsmith once remarked, as he waged war in the courts against *Private Eye*: "You have seen the power of the press, now you will see the power of money." The power of money has certainly been on display in the elongated legal battle of South African hotelier Stanley Tollman and his wife Beatrice to avoid extradition to New York on tax and bank fraud charges.

Last week senior district judge Tim Workman at the City of Westminster magistrates' court rejected the US extradition request for Stanley Tollman on the grounds that it would be "unjust and oppressive". He had already rejected the request for Mrs Tollman on medical grounds.

Stanley Tollman was first indicted in April 2002. It is disputed whether he reneged on an agreement to return from his London home to face trial. In March 2003 US prosecutors requested the extradition of both Tollmans but did nothing to push the case until August 2004, when they were arrested and legal proceedings began.

By then the controversial new Extradition Act had come into force allowing the US to fast track the extradition of anyone without the boring necessity required under the previous law of having to prove there was a case to answer. Since then there has been much furore – largely generated by the NatWest Three case – about the unfairness of a system designed for terrorism but increasingly used for white collar crime and for which a supine Labour government obtained no reciprocity.

But while the NatWest Three and others have been and gone, the Tollmans, aided by top lawyers Simmons & Simmons and a phalanx of QCs and barristers, have remained firmly in Britain.

The failure of the US to push for extradition certainly caused the delay until August 2004. But since then defence tactics of contesting, however legitimately, a variety of collateral legal issues bear much responsibility for exactly the type of delay which was supposed to be prevented by the new act. Issues such as disclosure and abuse of process, plus whether the US was able to withdraw its 2003 request under the old act and

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE & RIGG

DEVELOPMENT ISN'T JUST US SUBSIDIZING POOR COUNTRIES...
TERMS OF TRADE CONF 2007
...IT'S POOR COUNTRIES SUBSIDIZING US!
GLOBAL CAPITAL

resubmit a 2004 request under the new one, took until September 2006 to resolve.

As Lord Justice Thomas pointed out in a high court ruling in June last year in favour of the US: "The conduct of extradition proceedings is expected to be expeditious." The aim was to resolve the issue "within a matter of a few months". Twenty-two months after the first hearing, there had been 12 hearings and all that had been achieved was "an order for disclosure of documents… no other progress has been made… The course taken in this case has been defended by none of the parties".

Perhaps not surprisingly, Lord Justice Thomas commented: "The way in which this case has proceeded gives rise to concern… It is particularly unjust that so little has been achieved over such a protracted period of time."

The high court ruled last September that the US could withdraw and resubmit its extradition request. The Lord Chief Justice Lord Phillips stated, presumably in a bid to inject belated compliance with the new law, that the district judge should "fix a date for the commencement of the extradition hearing without delay… no later than 60 days from the delivery of this judgment".

Well, there were hearings in November – and February, March, April and May. These were mainly concerned with the injustice caused to the Tollmans by the "passage of time" since the alleged offences in the 1990s. At one of the final hearings an exasperated Alun Jones QC for the US government declared: "After 33 months enough is enough." It was not until 29 May that there was a decision on Beatrice Tollman and a month later on her husband.

One consequence of the prolonged delay since the first indictment is that the Tollmans are that much older and so more subject to understandable health concerns about the risks from prison than they were five years ago. Stanley Tollman is almost 77 and his wife 73. One reason for not extraditing Stanley Tollman is the impact on his wife's mental state.

Another was the death of key witnesses. Arnold Tollman, Stanley's brother, died in 2004. However, he may have been of limited help seeing that he allegedly confessed to "a massive scheme to evade taxes" and "extensive tax crimes" by using bank accounts in Guernsey. Another missing witness, Tollman's British accountant Derek Evans, who handled the Guernsey paperwork, died in 2002 before any trial could begin. London lawyer Lionel Lipkin, who set up offshore trusts for Tollman, died even earlier.

The US case has also not been helped by the crudely aggressive tactics and comments of prosecutor Stanley Okula. These did not play well in London – where remarkably he was twice called a liar by Workman in his judgment – or in Canada where his bid to extradite Gavin Tollman, Arnold's son, was rejected and denounced as "egregious" by a judge.

While the London courts have been discussing Stanley Tollman's innocence, six others indicted with the Tollmans have long since either pleaded guilty or been convicted in the US. These include their son Brett who pleaded guilty to tax fraud and was jailed in 2004 for 33 months. Monty Hundley, Tollman's main business partner, was jailed in 2005 for eight years and given a $44m forfeiture order. He did not appeal.

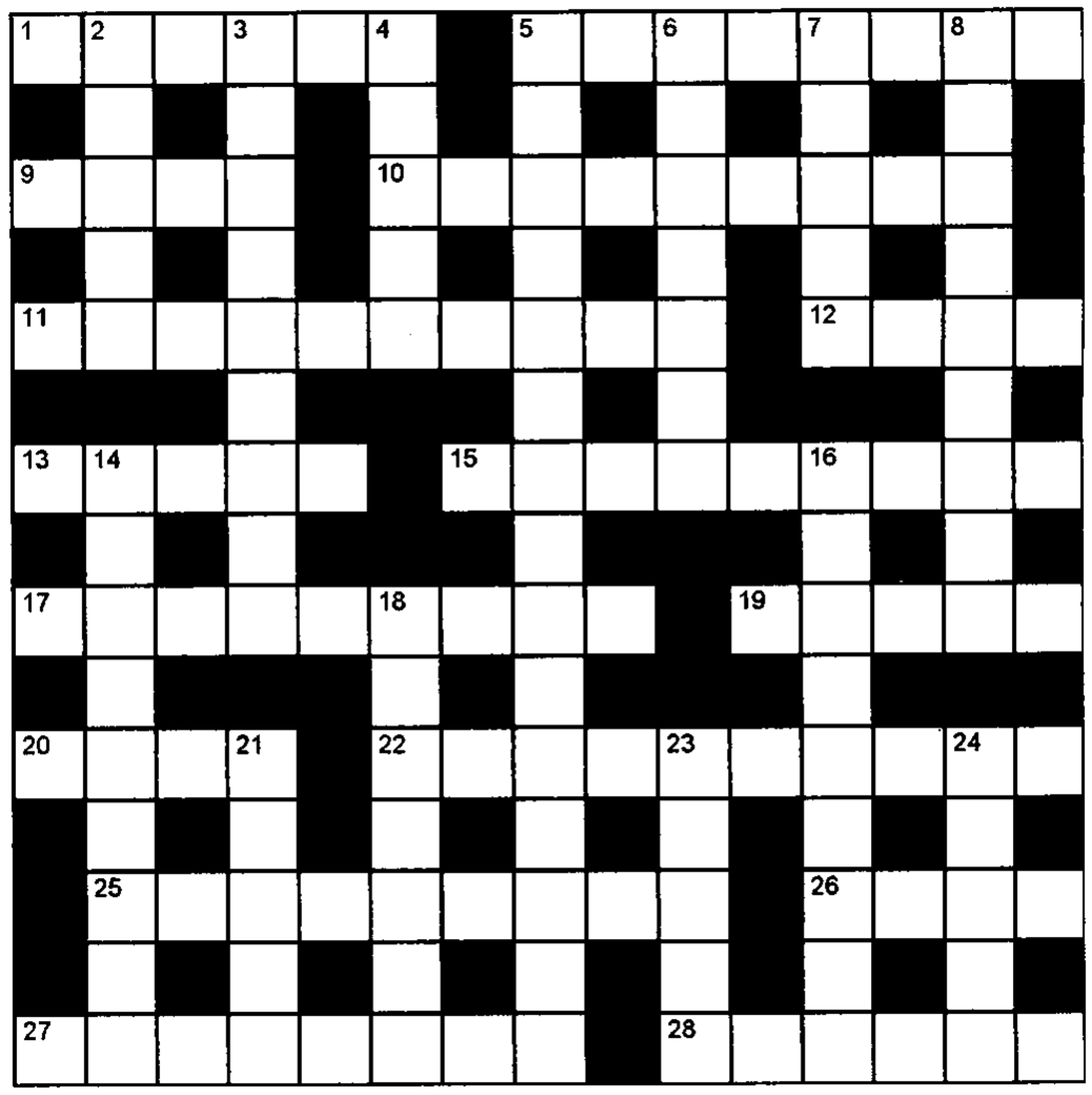
Tollman claims he knew nothing of the fraud on US banks or any failure to disclose payments from Guernsey. His unique "long lunches" defence is that he was rarely in New York and when he was in the office there he rarely looked at documents, signed what was put in front of him without reading and spent most of the time lunching at "21" and other expensive Manhattan tables.

The US will appeal both Workman decisions to the high court later this year, and beyond that no doubt the law lords await in 2008. For money is clearly no object in this case. And if the US loses – as may well happen – the British taxpayer will be left to pick up a huge multi-million bill for the Tollmans' freedom.

'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 343

by Cyclops



£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 13 July 2007

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk

ACROSS

1 Dick, embarrassed, got red (6)
5 Official row about liberal past (8)
9 Fringes of Ugandan party get an innocent to engage in "Ugandan discussions"? (4)
10 Drug-taking, corrupt film idol is "given relief" (9)
11 Of the nature of a ritual Cameron lie: pathetic (10)
12 Sick of bearing support for a religious arse (4)
13 Conservative's ultimate backing of Prime Minister Blair on retiring is meaningless (5)
15 USA's lying rotten, that's very plain (4,2,3)
17 Self-important politician gets in except debts follow (9)
19 Debutante primarily shags dopes (5)
20 Celebrity soprano's top and arse given a lift (4)
22 "Half of those people in politics bent" – contentious type (10)
25 Ex-PM gives everybody a good high in jail (9)
26 It's hard leaving the Commons, flower (4)
27 Whip's after stiff bum (8)
28 Fanny's stuck on fashionable cake (6)

DOWN

2 Catty thing's bound to be topless (5)
3 Old-fashioned Wally's darling taken aback by the pace of Nazism (5-4)
4 Action man gets to drive home with shapely Derek (5)
5 Intercourse with tossers on smack, the Pseuds Corner candidate's speciality (7,8)
6 He displays a pattern of political tub-thumping (7)
7 Joker welcomed by disheartened Tories – idiots! (5)
8 End with git stupidly getting gobbled by seedy, fruity thing and squirming (9)
14 Sumo wrestling volunteer militia meeting revolutionary leader under Hitler's nose (9)
16 Give a blow job without right back being prevented from practising (6,3)
18 Wearing soft netting and ready (2,5)
21 For over 50 years Brenda has left rude letters strewn about (5)
23 Note: Cyclops is, one way and another, nursing an erection finally (5)
24 Stuck up American number two – no time for foreign food (5)

Crossword 342 winner: BOB SOAR

ACROSS: 9 Oprah 10 Pubic hair 11 Smart-arse 12/23/17 In the public interest 13 Natural 15 Telford 16 Premier 18 Ipswich 20 Curator 22 Pop star 24 Ether 25 Back-bench 27 Horoscope 28 Ingot.

DOWN: 1 Loosen up 3 Whiter 4 Sparkler 5 Object 6 Achilles 7 Cartoonist 8 Friend 14 The Archers 18 In pocket 19 Hirohito 20 Creche 21 Rob Roy 26/2 No-go area.

YOBETTES
HUSBAND
Hello... Oh hi sweetheart... What? .. hang on...
It's our Beth, she's drunk spent all her taxi money can we pick her up?
Sorry luv... We're pissed too, there's no way I can drive

Centre for Investigative Journalism Summer School

July 20-22, 2007
Cass Business School,
City University, London

cij

Seymour Hersh

Lowell Bergman, Günter Wallraff
David Leigh
Listen to four of the world's greatest investigative journalists

Other speakers include:

Amina al-Tahabi, Heather Brooke, Jenny Chryss, Ali Fadhil, Luc Hermann Mark Hunter, Phillip Knightley, Audrius Lelkaitis, Tom Mangold, Robert Miller, Sharon Tiller

Radio and Television investigations, Undercover Reporting, How to Read and Use Company Accounts, How not to be sued for libel, Working in Iraq, Unearthing historical secrets, Advanced internet research, Writing, Interviewing, Making FOIA work for you, Organizing an investigation and much more.

For further information and registration details www.tcij.org

The Summer School is a non-profit charity supported by the Lorana Sullivan Foundation

Subscribe to PRIVATE EYE and enjoy

26 issues for only £28!

- FREE DELIVERY
- PERFECT GIFT FOR A FRIEND
- SAVE OVER 28%

Subscribe online at
www.subsonline.co.uk
or call our order hotline 01795 414 870
or complete the order form and send with payment to:
PRIVATE EYE, PO Box 326, Sittingbourne, Kent ME9 8FA

Subscription order form

☐ **Yes! I would like to subscribe to PRIVATE EYE for 26 issues**

☐ **UK £28** ☐ **Europe (Airmail) £34** ☐ **Rest of World (Airmail) £38**

Your details:

Title Initial Surname

Address

Postcode Tel. no.

Email

Yes, I would like to receive news of other products and services from Private Eye that may be of interest to me.

Payment details:

by Direct Debit – annually – please fill in the form BELOW

You may cancel at any time and receive a full refund on outstanding issues. PRIVATE EYE is serious about protecting your privacy. We do not share or sell data about our subscribers.

Instructions to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit
Originator's reference 768298

Subscriber ref. no. (to be completed by PRIVATE EYE)

PEYE ☐☐☐☐☐☐

To the Manager (Bank/Building Society name):

Address

Postcode

Name of account holder

Signature

Date

Branch sort code ☐☐☐☐☐☐

Account number ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit instructions from some types of account.

Instructions to your Bank or Building Society: Please pay PRIVATE EYE Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with PRIVATE EYE and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.

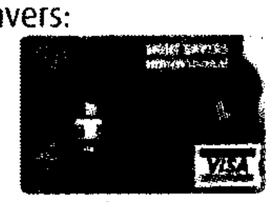
SOURCE CODE: N1188

Give the **gift of sight** through your credit card

Hassannul Banna had his sight restored with a simple cataract operation thanks to Sightsavers' supporters.

For more than 50 years Sightsavers International has been working to combat blindness in some of the world's poorest countries.

You can help us raise vital funds by opening a Sightsavers credit card; for every account opened The Co-operative Bank will give Sightsavers:



- **£15** as soon as your account is open, which could help pay for a cataract operation
- **£2.50** when you use your card in the first six months, which could treat five people suffering from trachoma
- **25p** for every £100 spent or transferred* to your card, which could protect two people from river blindness

Why pay more? The Sightsavers standard credit card offers you 0% on purchase and balance transfers* for six months and thereafter a standard rate of **18.9% APR typical/variable.**

For further details and to apply: Call 0800 002 006
or visit www.co-operativebank.co.uk

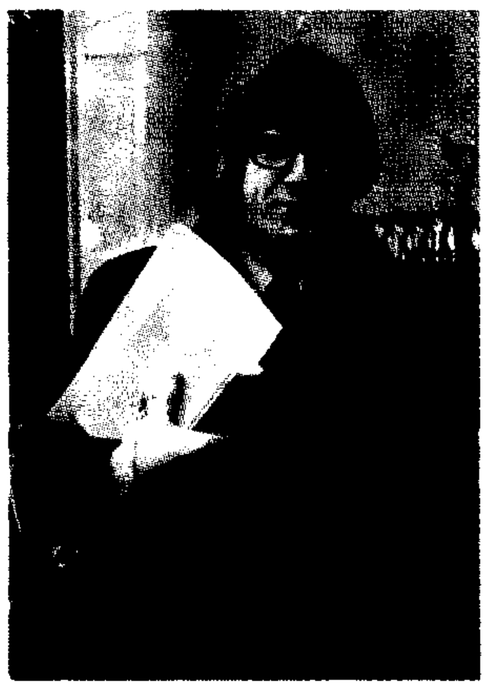
*A balance transfer fee of 2.5% of transfer value is applicable during promotional rate periods only (minimum of £5).

sight savers INTERNATIONAL
Registered Charity No. 207544

in association with
The CO-OPERATIVE BANK

Applicants must be UK residents aged 18 years or over. *Excludes balance transfers from other credit cards issued by the Bank. The Bank reserves the right to decline any application or offer a card product that differs from those advertised. Interest rates are correct at time of going to press 06/07. Calls may be monitored or recorded for security and training purposes. Credit facilities are provided by the Co-operative Bank, PO Box 101, 1 Balloon Street, Manchester M60 4EP and are subject to status. Registered No. 990937. **The Co-operative Bank is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority (No. 121885), subscribes to the Banking Code, is a member of the Financial Ombudsman Service and is licensed by the Office of Fair Trading (No. 006110).**

THE PAUL FOOT AWARD 2007



For the third year running ***Private Eye*** and ***The Guardian*** are awarding a prize for investigative/ campaigning journalism in memory of Paul Foot.

There will be an overall prize of £5000 and five runners up will also be awarded £1000 at a ceremony to be held in London, in October.

Submissions will be accepted for material published in a newspaper, magazine or on a website between 1st September 2006 and 31st August 2007.

For full details and application form visit
www.private-eye.co.uk

THE CLOSING DATE FOR ENTRIES IS 3rd September 2007.

OM SAI RAM

A fitting end to the ill-fitting British suit

A suitable man to spark a men's clothing revolution

Consider this proposition. Would you rather pay the same sum for a single, off-the-peg, chain store suit cut by a computer and sold to you by a spotty boy who thinks side vents are to be found on a Lambretta scooter, or for two bespoke, custom cut, hand-stitched suits, measured and sold to you by a man for whom suits are a lifetime's passion?

The British clothing chain store has a lot to fear from ***Mr. Raja M Daswani*** of Kowloon. If there were a global ambassador for men's suiting, Mr Daswani, who owns and runs Hong Kong's biggest tailoring business, would be that man. He and his family team measure and make hundreds of suits a week for discerning clients across the world.

Indeed, so successful is ***Mr. Daswani***, that – a little unnervingly as he is measuring you up – he freely admits he doesn't really need to work any more: 'My team is as experienced as I am. But I just love men's suits and I wouldn't feel right sitting at home. It's not a business. It's a mission.

'I love seeing customers walk in a really bad suit that cost them a fortune and walk out in one of our suits that's perfect in every way, made with a good heart in a superior fabric for a half or a quarter as much.'

The price of a Daswani shirt and suit are astonishing. We are talking from £19 (£25 including tax and duty) for a custom shirt and £129 (£169 including tax and duty) for a fully lined, made-to measure suit in a lightweight wool or linen, to £250 (£325 including tax and duty) for a 100 per cent wool, entirely hand finished suit in a British cloth, with every refinement from handmade button holes to knee lining. Even the most expensive suit, made in deluxe superfine wool for £1,500 (£1,950 including tax and duty), costs a third less than it would on **Savile Row**.

Raja Daswani may be based in Hong Kong, but his sartorial mission to the badly dressed and overpaying British customer brings him to the UK as often as once a month. He and his team take over hotel suites in major cities, so British customers can make an appointment and get the full Kowloon Monty.

Measurements and digital photos are taken here and emailed to Hong Kong. Often, your suit will be started on by a tailor 6,000 miles away before you've even left the hotel. You can have it couriered within a week or so, or wait for a second fitting when the Raja team hits your town again a few weeks later.

It now remains to see whether the Raja revolution, with its inspired mix of artistic flair, entrepreneurial genius and digital technology, will see the end of the off-the-peg British chain store suit. On price alone, it's a sartorial solution that will even please the Suits in accounts.

Business hours 10am - 8pm
(by appointment only)
email: raja@raja-fashions.com
Mobile: ***07786 543258***
Tel: 0163 557 4233
Website: www.raja-fashions.com

London	Sheraton Park Tower
July 9-15	Tel: 0778-654-3258
London	Novotel London Tower Bridge
July 16-18	Tel: 0778-654-3258
London	Hilton Paddington Hotel
July 19-22	Tel: 0778-654-3258
London	Canary Wharf
July 23-24	Four Seasons Hotel
	Tel: 0778-654-3258
London	Hilton On Park Lane
July 25-28	Tel: 0778-654-3258
Aberdeen	Thistle Aberdeen Caledonian
July 18-19	Tel: 0778-654-3258
Belfast	Holiday Inn
July 8	Tel: 0778-654-3258
Birmingham	Hyatt Regency Birmingham
July 23-24	Tel: 0778-654-3258
Bristol	Bristol Marriott Hotel
July 21-22	Tel: 0778-654-3258
Cambridge	Royal Cambridge Hotel
July 23-24	Tel: 0778-654-3258
Cardiff	Cardiff Hilton Hotel
July 19-20	Tel: 0778-654-3258
Dublin	Dublin Four Seasons Hotel
July 10-12	Tel: 0778-654-3258
Edinburgh	George Hotel
July 16-17	Tel: 0778-654-3258
Glasgow	Hilton Glasgow
July 14-15	Tel: 0778-654-3258
Heathrow	Sheraton Heathrow
July 29-30	Tel: 0778-654-3258
Norwich	Marriott Sprowton Manor Hotel
July 16-17	Tel: 0778-654-3258

RAJA FASHIONS
Main Shop: 34C Cameron Road, Ground Floor, Kowloon, Hong Kong.
Tel:(852) 2366 7624 Fax:(852) 23692807

Morgan

WAREHOUSE SURPLUS OUTLET

MAIL ORDER SALES LINE
0870 126 4831
www.morgancomputers.co.uk

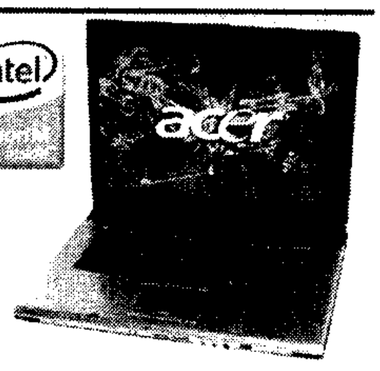
Stores in London, Birmingham and Manchester.
See below for store locations/opening hours.

ACER WIDESCREEN NOTEBOOK

Aspire 3662 notebook with large 80GB hard disk & superb CrystalBrite display.

- **Intel Celeron M 420, 1GB RAM**
- **80GB hard disk and DVD writer**
- **15.4" widescreen CrystalBrite TFT**
- **WiFi network, Windows XP Home**

Stock status: Factory rework stock
Warranty: 6 month warranty



£299.99 ex VAT **£352.49** inc VAT

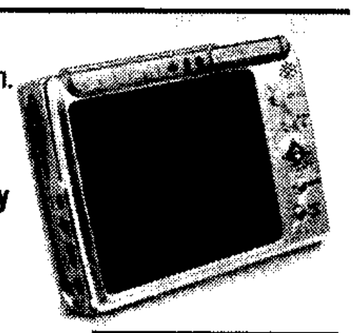
acer

30GB MP3/VIDEO PLAYER

Plays music, movies and photos - carry your entire media collection.

- **Plays MP3, WMA, JPEG, AVI**
- **2.2" colour LCD display**
- **Long life rechargeable battery**
- **SD card slot, USB 2.0 interface**

Stock status: Brand new stock
Warranty: 1 year warranty



£59.99 ex VAT **£70.49** inc VAT

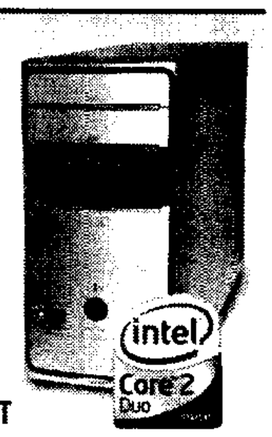
MANUFACTURED BY Mustek

PHILIPS MT2800 CORE 2 DUO

Powerful Intel Core 2 Duo E6400 processor & 300GB hard disk.

- **2GB RAM, DVD writer, TV Tuner**
- **7-in-1 card reader, WiFi network**
- **ATI X1300 256MB graphics card**
- **MS Windows MCE & Works 8.0**

Stock status: Philips Re-work
Warranty: 6 months warranty



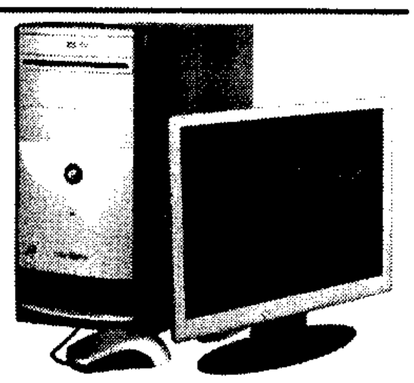
£399.99 ex VAT **£469.99** inc VAT

EMACHINES DUAL CORE BUNDLE

Powerful dual core desktop system with superb 17" flat panel TFT monitor.

- **Intel Pentium D 820 dual core chip**
- **1GB DDR 2 RAM, 160GB hard disk**
- **Dual layer DVD±RW, 5.1 audio**
- **Card reader, XP Home and Works**

Stock status: Brand new stock
Warranty: 1 year warranty



£339.99 ex VAT **£399.49** inc VAT

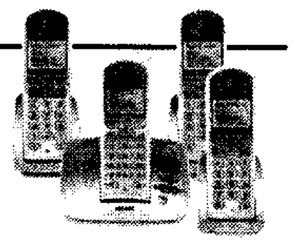
emachines

PHILIPS DECT QUAD PACK

- **Easy to use cordless digital phones**
- **Integrated 15 min voice recorder**
- **Polyphonic ringtones, backlit screen**

Brand new stock, 1 year warranty

£49.99 ex VAT **£58.74** inc VAT

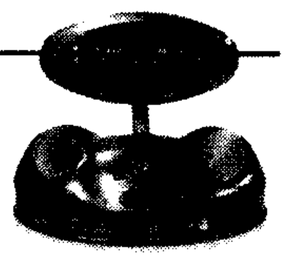


PURE BUG DIGITAL RADIO

- **Superb quality DAB digital radio**
- **Pause, rewind or record live radio**
- **Graphite or white finish**

Grade A stock, 1 year warranty

£39.99 ex VAT **£46.99** inc VAT

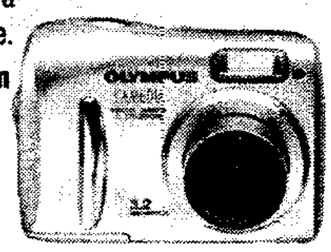


OLYMPUS D-535 ZOOM

Compact easy to use digital camera with 3x optical zoom & movie mode.

- **3.2 megapixel with optical zoom**
- **1.5" LCD colour screen**
- **4 program "scene" modes**
- **Multimode auto flash, xD card**

Stock status: Factory rework stock
Warranty: 6 month warranty



£29.99 ex VAT **£35.24** inc VAT

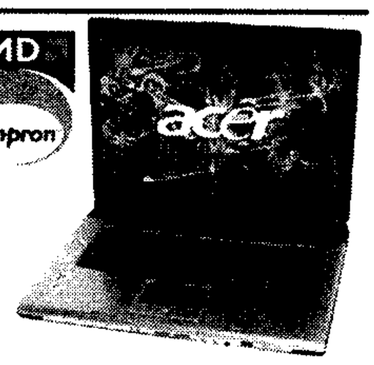
OLYMPUS

ACER 17" WIDESCREEN NOTEBOOK

Acer Aspire notebook with large 120GB hard disk and 17" CrystalBrite display.

- **AMD Sempron 3400+ processor**
- **512MB RAM, 120GB hard disk**
- **DVD writer, 128MB nVidia graphics**
- **WiFi network, Windows XP MCE**

Stock status: Factory rework stock
Warranty: 6 month warranty



£349.99 ex VAT **£411.24** inc VAT

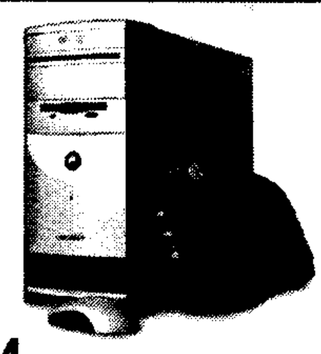
acer

E-MACHINES P4 2.93GHZ

E4026 factory rework PC with full warranty and telephone support.

- **256MB RAM, 80GB hard disk**
- **Multiformat DL DVD writer**
- **56K modem and 10/100 LAN**
- **Windows XP Home/Works 8.0**

Stock status: Factory rework stock
Warranty: 1 year warranty



£169.99 ex VAT **£199.74** inc VAT

emachines

HP 15" TFT DISPLAY

- **L1502 - compact 15" flat panel display**
- **1024 x 768 res, wide viewing angle**
- **Stylish black casing with silver bezel**

As new stock, 1 year warranty

£49.99 ex VAT **£58.74** inc VAT

SANDISK CRUZER MICRO

- **Diminutive 1GB USB 2.0 flash drive**
- **Perfect for data backup or transfer**
- **2GB model £11.99 (Ex VAT)**

Brand new, 2 year warranty

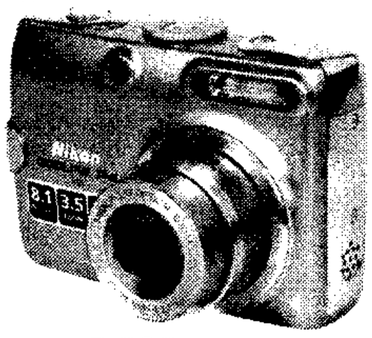
£6.99 ex VAT **£8.21** inc VAT

NIKON COOLPIX P4 - 8 M/PIXEL

Top quality camera with Nikkor optical zoom and advanced vibration reduction.

- **8.1 megapixel with 3.5x optical zoom**
- **Large bright 2.5" LCD display**
- **16 scene modes, movies with sound**
- **Face priority AF, auto flash, SD storage**

Stock status: Brand new
Warranty: 1 year Nikon warranty



£99.99 ex VAT **£117.49** inc VAT

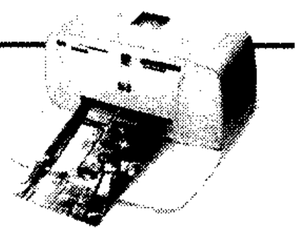
Nikon

HP PHOTOSMART PS 335

- **Portable 6" x 4" photo printer**
- **Lab quality, 2.5" colour screen**
- **Card reader, USB & PictBridge**

Brand new stock, 1 year warranty

£29.99 ex VAT **£35.24** inc VAT

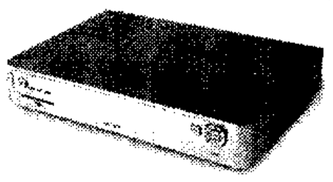


MATSUI TWIN TUNER 80GB PVR

- **Freeview digital TV recorder**
- **Watch one and recorder another**
- **Pause live TV, 7 day EPG**

Factory rework, 6 month warranty

£59.99 ex VAT **£70.49** inc VAT

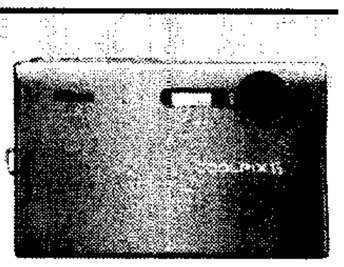


NIKON COOLPIX S5 DIGITAL

Slimline 6.0 megpaixel camera with large bright 2.5" display.

- **Quality Nikkor 3x optical zoom**
- **Choice of 15 scene modes**
- **Face priority auto focus**
- **Cool Station docking station**

Stock status: Factory rework stock
Warranty: 6 month warranty



£79.99 ex VAT **£93.99** inc VAT

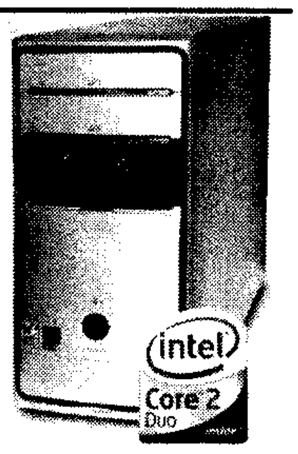
Nikon

PHILIPS FREEVENTS MT1700

Intel Pentium D Dual Core 2.8GHz processor, Wireless keyboard and mouse supplied.

- **1GB DDR2 RAM, 160GB SATA hard disk**
- **DVD re-writer, digital TV tuner & WiFi**
- **ATI X1300 graphics with 128MB RAM**
- **Microsoft Windows MCE and Works 8.0**

Stock status: Philips Re-work
Warranty: 6 month warranty



£269.99 ex VAT **£317.24** inc VAT

Buy now.. Pay later

9 MONTHS INTEREST FREE CREDIT ON ANY SALE OVER £400

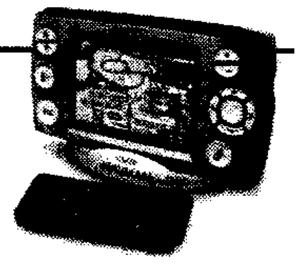
SUBJECT TO STATUS, OVER 18'S, WRITTEN QUOTE UPON REQUEST

NAVMAN ICN 550 GPS

- **Sat Nav with full UK/Euro maps**
- **3.5" screen, fuel & park buttons**
- **Free T1 module for live traffic info**

Brand new, 1 year warranty

£169.36 **£199.00**



TO HAVE A FREE COPY OF OUR FLYER DELIVERED TO YOUR DOOR EVERY MONTH PLEASE CALL 0870 126 4831

CENTRAL LONDON
64-72 New Oxford Street
London WC1A 1AX
Tel 020 7255 2115
Fax 020 7436 6285

GREENFORD
Unit 25 Derby Road
Metropolitan Ctr UB6 8UJ
Tel 020 8575 0055
Fax 020 8575 7985

BIRMINGHAM
34 Edgbaston Centre, Hagley Road, Birmingham B16 8SH
Tel 0121 452 1141
Fax 0121 455 6855

MANCHESTER
Unit 11-12 Station Approach
Manchester M1 2GH
Tel 0161 237 1111
Fax 0161 237 3146

Monday-Friday	9.00am - 5.30pm
New Oxford St	10:00am - 6:30pm
Saturday	**9.00am - 5.00pm**
New Oxford St	10:00am - 6:00pm
Sunday	**10.00am- 4.00pm**
New Oxford St	11.00pm - 5:00pm

AMERICAN EXPRESS · Maestro · MasterCard · VISA

Stock & prices subject to change. E&OE

PRIVATE EYE Classifieds 020 7240 9129

Email: private-eye@tenalpspublishing.com
Fax: 020 7379 7118

£2.60 per word (£26 min charge). Centred box £15. Box number £15. All charges inc VAT.
Reply to Box number at: Private Eye, Ten Alps Publishing, 9 Savoy Street, London WC2E 7HR.

Would advertisers please note that copy date for July 20th issue will be 1pm Tuesday July 10th.

Eye Art

ARTIST/PRINTMAKER
www.printersfingers.me.uk
Nature inspired, limited edition, digital and traditional prints for sale. Commissions considered. Email contact@printersfingers.me.uk or visit website for more details.

PSS3T. WANNA BUY A BANKSY? Visit www.spitalfieldsartmarket.co.uk

Artforums.co.uk Friendly, free forums for artists, art lovers and art for sale.

LIVING THE EYE LIFE: an exhibition of photographs taken at Private Eye in the Seventies by Eric Hands. Brewery Arts Centre, Kendal, Cumbria. Saturday 24th June – Sunday 23rd July.

ORIGINAL, EROTIC ART for sale, by female artist www.dancingnymphs.co.uk

Eye Wear

PUKKA PYJAMAS AND NIGHTSHIRTS for men, women and boys. www.pukkapyjamas.co.uk

Eye To Eye

MEET COUNTRYSIDE LOVERS. www.countryside-love.co.uk

EYE CANDY: Beautiful, tall, indulgent London lady, 36. Needs lovely man. Don't need your money, babies or house as I have my own. Require friend, lover and fellow intellect to read with, discuss, drink, dine and desire. Not necessarily in that order. Reply Box 206478.

GENUINE, FUN-LOVING wealthy gentleman, late 50s, retired with GSOH, seeks attractive lady up to 54 years old to spoil and treat like a Princess. Main interests travel and cruising French Coast in his yacht. Telephone: 07781 166666. PM.

FEMALE WANTED, 35-47, for considerate looks / brains. Guy gym-friendly, easy going, GSOH, loves music, films. All letters answered with mugshot of yours truly. Vince, London / Kent. Reply Box 205068.

Eye Novelties

SHOP FOR FUN @ www.gizmoandwidget.com A brilliant site for novelties!

TITLES-LORD, LADY ETC. Tel/fax: 0800 652 6641. www.elitetitles.co.uk

ALCOHOLICS CONSPICUOUS! We enjoy drinking and don't mind who knows it. Join us at www.alcoholicsconspicuous.co.uk T-Shirt and Membership Certificate.

CORRUPTION GAMES launches "*The Blair Game* – Politics New Britain". Relive the successes, embarrassments, failures, disasters and "spin to win". www.corruptiongames.co.uk / ebay shop corruptiongames

Eye Escape

CAPE TOWN: Two-bedroom apartment directly on the beach overlooking Table Mountain, five minutes to waterfront. www.capetownbeachapartment.com

ITALIANATE VILLA – Bath valley, sleeps 12. Modern kitchen and dining room; two lounges; Sky plasma; log fires; Loggias and balconies; 3 baths; 3 showers; on the canal side, River Avon very close. Tennis court; large gardens; own woodland; 40 minutes from Bristol Airport, 10 minutes from Bath Spa station. Available 22nd July - 24th August. Complimentary membership to exclusive Bath club. See www.pendragonhouse.net and www.theresidencebath.com info@pendragonhouse.net Telephone: 07836 344 973.

FAT BRIBE DISCOUNTS offered by Top Med Hotels: 4-star accommodation for 2-star prices. Our famous one: www.scottshotel.com Or fabulous views: www.scottsgalilea.com Or our 'can't lose' £3.5m property giveaway: www.winaholidayhomeinspain.com

RURAL SECLUSION. En-suite privacy, comfort and discretion. Solo paying guest very welcome. Please write Box 206088.

WALKING, CYCLING and golfing holidays in France. www.bastiontravel.co.uk info@bastiontravel.co.uk

TRANQUILLITY – to rent, two-bedroom farmhouse on 50 acres, one hour south of Toulouse, all mod cons, large pool. www.stvictordufau.com Telephone: 00 33 (0)561 607 721.

OUTER HEBRIDES: Old crofthouse on wild, unspoilt island. Beautiful beaches, Machair. www.boreray-island.co.uk

HAMLET COMPLEX for renovation, Central Brittany half acre site; three gites, cottage, Stone longere. Rural location, close to town. £75,000. (01278) 685045. www.bannockfarm.com/gite.htm

STUNNING EIGHTEENTH CENTURY house with pool in Valbonne (between Cannes and Nice). Sleeps 10. Available August. Telephone: 0033 660 047 260. Email: pjfleming@free.fr

Eye Bet

STAR RACING, telephone credit bookmaker to the discerning gent. Discretion and personal attention assured. Telephone: 0845 2608021. www.star-racing.co.uk

SportRex: the online community for everything horseracing. Join today! http://www.sportrex.co.uk/

MAKE BIG MONEY PART TIME from playing poker – even if you've never played before! Full money-back guarantee. www.poker-flush.co.uk

Eye Read

FREE READ discussion of, and recommendations for multiple orgasm in women. http://www.members.aol.com/DixKenne/paradise.html

READING SURVEY FUN! Participants all ages welcome; MSc study. jane_eyrehead@hotmail.co.uk

www.footnotesystems.co.uk Any book, fantastic prices, immediate delivery. Loyalty Programme Paypal.

FROM COLD WAR TO HOLY WAR – why? Read free eBook: www.power-without-the-glory.com

Eye Business

ZERO-TAX AVAILABLE since Manx 2007 Budget. For full details telephone: 01624 612 777 or www.zero-tax.co.uk

MEMORY CARDS: Brand name, low prices, fast despatch. www.cheap-memory-4-u.co.uk

ARE YOU A WEALTHY PHILANTHROPIST who can help us revive a great British theatre tradition? Currently seeking benefactors and donors. Please contact us – www.londonrepertorycompany.com

PR FOR GROWN-UPS. Supergroup virtual firm. ROI, not bullshit: www.campaignteam.biz

PROVEN VINTAGE GIFTWEAR requires affluent global outlet / investment. finetable@hotmail.co.uk Telephone: 07939 078 380.

QUALITY CUSTOM SOFTWARE: Experienced developers, best rates. www.dataidentic.co.uk Telephone: 01283 500 130.

YOU'LL NEVER BE able to text as quick as your kids – unless you cheat – text from your pc! Get an aql account: www.aql.com or text privateeye to 64446.

SOUTHERN SPAIN. Well-established media and property business requires investor. Would consider selling. Genuine calls only: 08717 897 387 or 0034 610 602 665.

Eye Charity

AMAZING CAMBRIDGESHIRE MENTAL HEALTH CHARITY, working with unwell people of all ages, urgently seeks enlightened sponsors / patrons to help bridge looming £60K funding gap and enable development of our much needed service. Please see www.grouptherapycentres.org.uk or contact Paul Delderfield on 01223 357221. Donations to LloydsTSB, S/C: 30-91-56. A/C: 00015775. The Group Therapy Centre. Charity No: 291708. Please get involved.

SPONSOR my next heart attack for AIDS orphans in Kenya: www.fatblokeonabike.org.uk

Eye Law

FIND ANYBODY: 0121 247 5550. Eye Services top.

THE 'NO WIN – NO FEE' specialists: Professional Negligence (www.proneg.co.uk): Disputed Wills and Employment Law (www.sblaw.co.uk), Accident Claims (www.newdeal-fairdeal.co.uk). Free case assessment: 0808 155 6389.

YES, you can now come direct to a barrister. Tel: 020 7833 9625.

DIVORCED/DIVORCING? Protect your assets / income. We fight your corner. Thirty years' experience. Contact Charles Murison, Pellmans, 1 Abbey Street, Eynsham, Oxford OX29 4TB. Telephone 01865 884 400.

CONTRACTS 4 COMMERCE. Spend HUNDREDS rather than THOUSANDS on your legal costs! www.contracts4commerce.com

HAVE YOU BEEN LET DOWN BY YOUR SOLICITORS OR DOES YOUR SOLICITOR LACK THAT CUTTING EDGE? Ahmud & Co. Solicitors, the lawyers that make a difference. www.ja-solicitors.com Telephone 020 8886 1111 or info@ja-solicitors.com No Legal Aid.

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR SOLICITORS THAT DELIVER? Costs agreed and fixed at the start. Direct communication with your lawyer. Contact Cato Solicitors on 0870 4811828.

Eye Sell

FACTORY SURPLUS computers and notebooks, printers, digital cameras, DVDs etc, etc. www.morgancomputers.co.uk or call 0870 126 4830.

OLD PERSIAN RUGS – mostly £100-£3000. Not a shop just a shed. DESMOND NORTH, East Peckham, Kent. TN12 5JB. Telephone 01622 871 353.

FORGET THE OSCARS, BAFTAS AND NOBELS. You'll find the real award winners are our unbelievably cheap flat screen TVs, hi-fi and home-cinema products! Call 0845 900 1230 for your nearest store or check out www.richersounds.com

UNUSED 8-SPEED AIRNIMAL folding bike for sale: £525 (cost £670). Tel (020) 7284 0788.

ELECTRIC BIKES. No licence or insurance required. For a colour brochure telephone 02890 838111 anytime.

EYES 796 TO 1187: Offers? Tel: 01753 525 249.

DRIVE PUSSY WILD! Purrfect gift ideas. www.sparkipuss.com... for cat lovers

Eye Say

CAPITAINE. WHEN YOU'RE GONE I miss you. Love Sous-Fifre.

Eye Need

WAR VETERAN. STILL traumatised, cannot cope any longer. Urgently need finance to retain a semblance of normality for myself. S/C: 08-93-00. A/C: 04224989.

AWARD-WINNING international performer seeks visionary philanthropist for unique investment opportunity in major new theatrical production celebrating flamboyant Welsh Dancing Marquis. Majority of funding in place but £8,000 needed to complete. Contact: info@r-i-p-e.co.uk (www.r-i-p-e.co.uk)

LIBERIAN GIRL needs help to go home and start afresh. liberian.g@hotmail.com HSBC, S/C: 40-35-40. A/C: 11116053.

INVESTOR(S) REQUIRED: Dirty groovy band Turning Green are about to change the face of music. Three albums self-produced. Self-touring, self-funding so far. Please talk to us: www.myspace.com/turninggreen info@turning-green.com

MS SUFFERER NEEDS £20K for disabled friendly extension. Currently sleeping on sofa as can't go upstairs. Any help appreciated. S/C: 07-01-16. A/C: 19602072.

MOTHER NEEDS OPERATION or will go blind. Extremely expensive procedure, please help. S/C: 60-02-08. A/C: 60022981.

AIDS ORPHANS, BOTSWANA. Gap year. Help me to help them. S/C: 82-61-20. A/C 60140400.

BORN WRITER, ground down, 30 years, soul-destroying 9-5 without means of escape, needs chance to spread creative wings. Any help could change life. S/C: 16-31-23. A/C: 11903197.

IN A HOLE – please throw me a ladder! S/C: 60-16-07. A/C: 66037735.

BELOVED SISTER NEEDS £112 a day for Tykerb breast cancer: Treatment pending NICE Approval at least six months' away. More info Box 207437. S/C: 08-92-50. A/C: 50029222.

YOUNG GAY GUY desperately trying to get out of spiralling debt. Urgently need £5000. Abbey, S/C: 09-01-26. A/C: 96644305.

AN ITALIAN CONUNDRUM – thirteen hectares, two landslides and one ruin – need help solving this one. S/C: 20-55-13. A/C: 10752975.

YOUNG MAN, NEARLY 30. Diagnosed with degenerative illness, will soon be out of work. Nowhere to turn, needs second chance. S/C: 40-41-18. A/C: 41255541.

Eye Services

FIND ANYBODY, debts recovered, evidence and case building. www.debtrecoveryuk.biz Telephone: 0121 247 5550 and 07773 788389.

DEMOBILISED OFFICER, finding peace incredibly tedious, would welcome diversion. Legitimate if possible. Excitement essential. Would be prepared to consider permanent job if suitably impressed by applicant for his services. Reply at once: hugh.drummond@yahoo.co.uk

CREDITORS THREATENING? Avoid bankruptcy: Confidential, discreet debt solutions. Call 0800 970 0750.

VAT PROBLEMS? Taxman on your case? Speak to Eamon McNicholas. www.EamonMcNicholas.com

STD POSTAL TESTING AND TREATMENT: Chlamydia and gonorrhoea, £45. Chlamydia, £25. Results emailed. www.DrThom.com

BORIS HAS ONE – DO YOU? A mailing address keeps your business private. Choose from over 100 locations. Phone or email to check for mail – we can send it anywhere, any time. Great value starts from under £1 a day. Visit www.mbe.co.uk, call free on 0800 623 123 or email marketing@mbe.co.uk quoting ref PE2.

SPEECH LOOMING? Relax, I'll write it for you! You're due to speak at a wedding / dinner / event. Don't waste time worrying. Lawrence: 07970 046 230 or www.greatspeechwriting.co.uk

SPECIALIST PRIVATE HEALTH COVER FOR THE SELF-EMPLOYED. If you're self-employed or a member of a profession and want to make large savings on quality comprehensive health cover, visit wpa.org.uk or call us on 0800 783 3 783 for a chat. WPA is regulated by the FSA.

TAX PROBLEMS? Speak with a Chartered Accountant. No obligation. N. W. London. Michael J Perry FCA. Tel: 020 8952 4055.

PRIVATE INVESTIGATORS for hire, surveillance, tracing, de-bugging and corporate enquiries. Nationwide service. Telephone: 07948 187 210.

HOME-BASED ADDICTIONS treatment. Effective affordable and confidential. www.addictionsuk.com Telephone: 0845 4567 030.

LOST COMPUTER DATA recovered. No data, no fee. Deleted files, crashed hard drives, data from formatted disks, password protected databases, files, lost account passwords. Telephone: 07813 647 182. bill@oakey.org.uk

PROMOTE YOUR PRODUCT or business: Television / film actor for hire. Tel: 01508 471 485.

DAWKINS' ATHEISM Abstruse. Accurate Atheism Available, Addressing After-business Audiences. Telephone: 01332 722006. pjwatheist@hushmail.com

SECRETARIAL SERVICES and Virtual Assistance available. Telephone: 020 8980 9091 or email info@paconfidential.org.uk

UNFORGETTABLE ENTERTAINMENT. Champion close-up magician, cardsharp and conman. www.mystifier.co.uk

VOCAL COACHING and speechwriting: What to say, and how to say it. info@vocalfusion.co.uk Telephone: 07973 835 292.

Eye Contact

LOVING LINKS. UK's leading discreet adult dating service since 1994. Unique top level one-to-one matching service and fast online email system. Call David for a chat on 08456 440 919.

MEET ORIENTAL LADIES in London / South East. Telephone 01892 833 102 or www.jasminintroductions.com

kharma-massage.co.uk We offer a genuine, relaxing and uplifting massage. Telephone: 020 7706 2318 or 07789 824 854.

MASSAGE THERAPY and relaxation with understanding female, Central London. Telephone: 07930 214 606.

TANTRIC MASSAGE by one or two ladies. Lancaster Gate / Paddington, W2. Telephone: 0870 232 2007 or 07813 295 566.

THERAPEUTIC AND SENSUAL massage by ITEC qualified masseuse. Victoria. Telephone: 020 7932 0395.

MATURE LADY would like to entertain nice gentleman. Telephone: 07968 460 852.

MATURE SENSUAL LADY sought by male, 50, London solvent and amusing, looking for loving relationship. Reply gentleman54@hotmail.co.uk

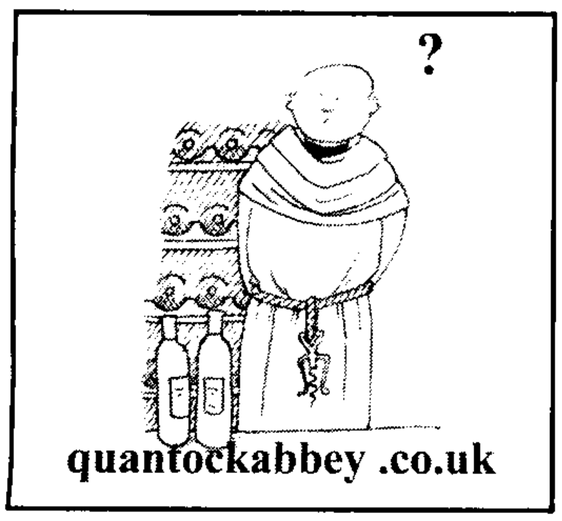
IVORY TOWERS. The intelligent online dating site for graduates of all eras. www.ivorytowers.net

STUNNING MATURE LADY would like to meet business gentleman. London / South. Tel: 07960 368 835.

AIR-HOSTESS has occasional time to spoil you! London: 07952 369 222. Paris: 0033 626 218 858.

SPEED DATING for GROWN-UPS! Age 35+, no upper age limit: Norwich, City Centre, July 19; Bury St Edmunds, Bury, July 26; Brighton, The Zap Club, July 31; London, West End, August 8. Book now online. www.kcdating.co.uk or call 01728 635064 and 07986 213120. Plus Private Client Matchmaking for the discerning professional.

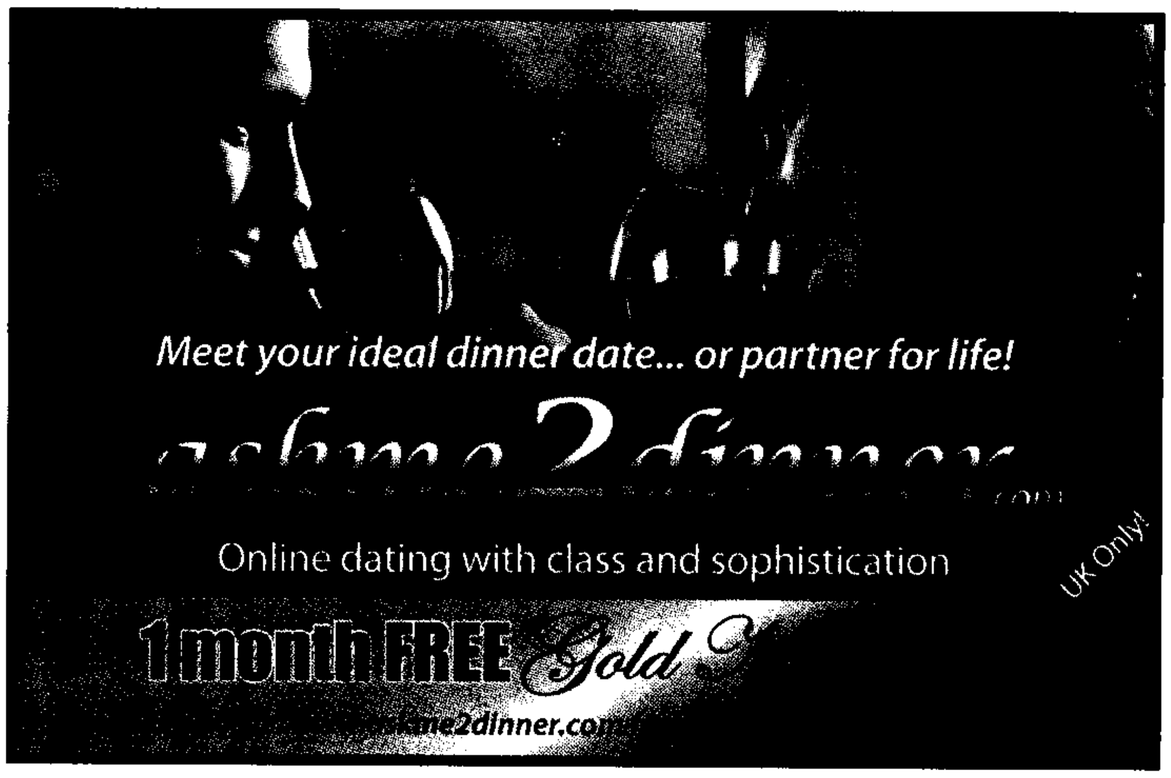
To place your classified advertisement please call Robert Angullia on 020 7240 9129



Heath Robinson's Helpful Solutions
5 July - 7 October 2007
An exhibition of over 90 original cartoons.
Accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue.
The Cartoon Museum
35 Little Russell Street, London WC1
020 7580 8155
www.cartoonmuseum.org
info@cartoonmuseum.org
£4/ £3/ Free to students and under 18s

Atlantic Fresh Crab & Lobster
direct to your door from the cool, clear waters off Land's End
01736 788824
www.greatatlantic.co.uk

www.Alcoholics Conspicuous .co.uk
ALCOHOLICS CONSPICUOUS!
We enjoy drinking and don't mind who knows it.
Join us at www.alcoholicsconspicuous.co.uk.
T-Shirt and Membership Certificate.



CREATIVE SUMMER COURSES AT
HURTWOOD HOUSE
THE SCHOOL WITH THE BEST PERFORMANCE

A ONE WEEK RESIDENTIAL INTENSIVE ACTING COURSE.
Are you talented, ambitious, develop your acting skills with the best of the best. Acting for stage, for film and television, audition preparation, voice/speech/movement and combat.
July 2007 Cost £1250. Aged 15-19.

AN EIGHT DAY RESIDENTIAL INTENSIVE DANCE COURSE.
Launched by RAMBERT DANCE COMPANY.
An exciting introduction to professional dance training. Masterclasses and workshops both challenging and inspirational, work with skilled industry professionals. Ballet / hip hop / jazz / street jazz / contemporary / musical theatre. July 21st -28th Cost £1250. Aged 15-19.

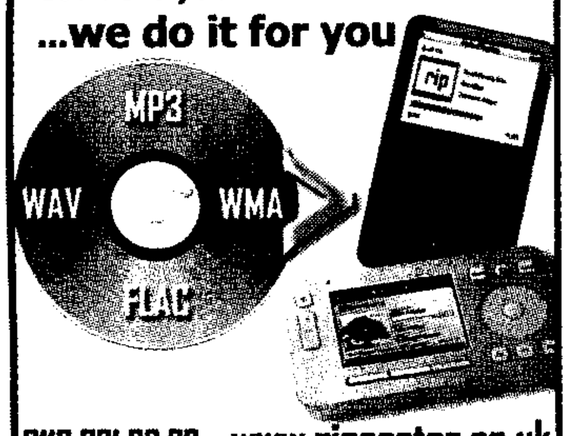
A ONE WEEK RESIDENTIAL FILM-MAKING COURSE.
Are you considering a career in film or television? This is a hands on Directors Course covering all stages of film making, including pre-production, story-boarding, lighting, sound, camera work and digital editing. July 2007 Cost £1500. Aged 15-19.

Web: **www.hurtwoodhouse.com**
Email: **info@hurtwood.net** Telephone: **01483 279000**

ripcaster.co.uk

The Quick and Easy way to convert your CD collection...

...we do it for you



0118 321 82 92 www.ripcaster.co.uk

Let us convert your CD collection into a Digital Music Library

STOP YOUR SNORING!

Designed to hold the lower jaw gently forward so opening the airway, the **SnorBan** mouthpiece lets you breathe without snoring.

The **snoring stops.**

- *FIGHTS DAYTIME FATIGUE*
- *INCREASES OXYGEN INTAKE*
- *EASY TO WEAR & FIT*
- *30-DAY REFUND IF NOT SATISFIED*

£45.00 inc P&P

To order online, visit www.snorban.co.uk or call 01243 572993

Avenues

Professional Introduction Agency

wishes to recruit educated Gentlemen in their **50s and 60s** for trial complimentary memberships.

Tel: 0800 122 122

www.avenues.co.uk

- Online secure service
- Case Tracking
- No financial risk

PERSONAL INJURY CLAIMS

www.accinet.co.uk
or ring 0800 1951001
Thomas & Meighen Solicitors

2007 Rhythm Festival

August 3\4\5

TWINWOOD ARENA Clapham nr. Bedford MK41 6AB

WEEKEND TICKETS: £89 each (£69 for 12-17 year olds) one child (11 & under) free with every adult, extra children £25 each. Camping: £20 per tent, £30 per caravan/campervan. Limited day tickets.

The music festival for grown-ups

ALABAMA 3 * JOE BONAMASSA
PRINCE BUSTER * DR JOHN
STEVE HARLEY & COCKNEY REBEL
HOTHOUSE FLOWERS * SETH LAKEMAN
LEVELLERS * TERRY REID
JOHN MAYALL & THE BLUES BREAKERS
IKE TURNER & THE KINGS OF RHYTHM
THE BEAT * BILL POSTERS WILL BE BAND
THE BLOCKHEADS * CHICKEN SHACK
BARRY CRYER & RONNIE GOLDEN
DR FEELGOOD * DEAN FRIEDMAN * NICK HARPER
THE MEN THEY COULDN'T HANG * JOHN OTWAY &
WILD WILLY BARRETT * THE YARDBIRDS

+ dozens more acts on 4 stages

Ticket hotline/info: 01254 350415

Visit us/book tickets online (no booking fee): www.rhythmfestival.net

WPA
wpa.org.uk

FREELANCE/SELF-EMPLOYED? CAN'T AFFORD TO BE ILL.

You can make big savings on quality private health cover from WPA. Guaranteed service – all UK hospitals covered – history of over 100 years. WPA are specialists in health insurance for the self-employed and members of the professions. For more details visit **wpa.org.uk** or call **0800 783 3 783** for a chat.

WPA is regulated by the FSA.

WHY NOT BE A WRITER?

As a freelance writer, you can earn very good money in your spare time, writing the stories, articles, books, scripts etc that editors and publishers want. Millions of pounds are paid annually in fees and royalties. Earning your share can be fun, profitable and creatively fulfilling.

To help you succeed, we offer you a first-class, home-study course from professional writers – with individually tailored tuition and expert personal guidance from your tutor. You learn about writing articles, stories, novels, romances, historicals, journalism, writing for children, radio, TV, the stage etc. You are advised on style, presentation, **HOW TO SELL YOUR WRITING,** copyright – and much more. In short, you learn how to be a successful writer.

If you want to be a writer, this is the way to start! It's ideal for beginners. No previous experience or special education required. You can earn while you learn. Details free – including EXPERT OPINIONS. Full refund if not successful. Visit our website or call our Freephone number now.

www.writersbureau.com

FREE CALL 24 ☎ HRS **0800 856 2008** Quote Ref: **NN767**

Please send me free details of how to become a successful freelance writer.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

.....

..... POST CODE .....

The Writers Bureau
FREEPOST NN767, MANCHESTER, M1 9HZ

email: 7W1NN@writersbureau.com
Please include your name and address

Accredited by The ODL Quality Council

Brian Jenner

SPEECHWRITER
SOCIAL · BUSINESS · POLITICAL
www.brianjenner.com
01202 551257

Lost out due to bad advice?

Why don't you sue your accountant/solicitor /surveyor?

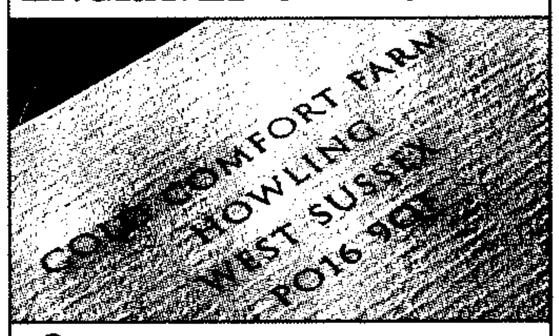
Contact: GORVINS on 0800 015 9986 or email enquiries@gorvins.com

CHAPMAN
HAND CRAFTED ENGLISH BAGS

Call for brochure or
Buy online at our website

01228 514514
www.chapmanbags.com

ENGRAVED STATIONERY



Engraved – or die-stamped – printing, in which the text is printed from a copper die and raised from the paper, is the best type of printing there is and from shops in Bond Street it is very expensive. However, not only is the same stationery purchased from us surprisingly affordable, it will also be printed for you by the man who printed it for Buckingham Palace and the House of Commons.

Call **01962 738492** for a brochure and samples or order online at **www.leemingbrothers.co.uk.**

LEEMING BROTHERS · SWAN COTTAGE OLD ALRESFORD · HANTS · SO24 9DZ

Swim At Home

The Treadmill for Swimmers!

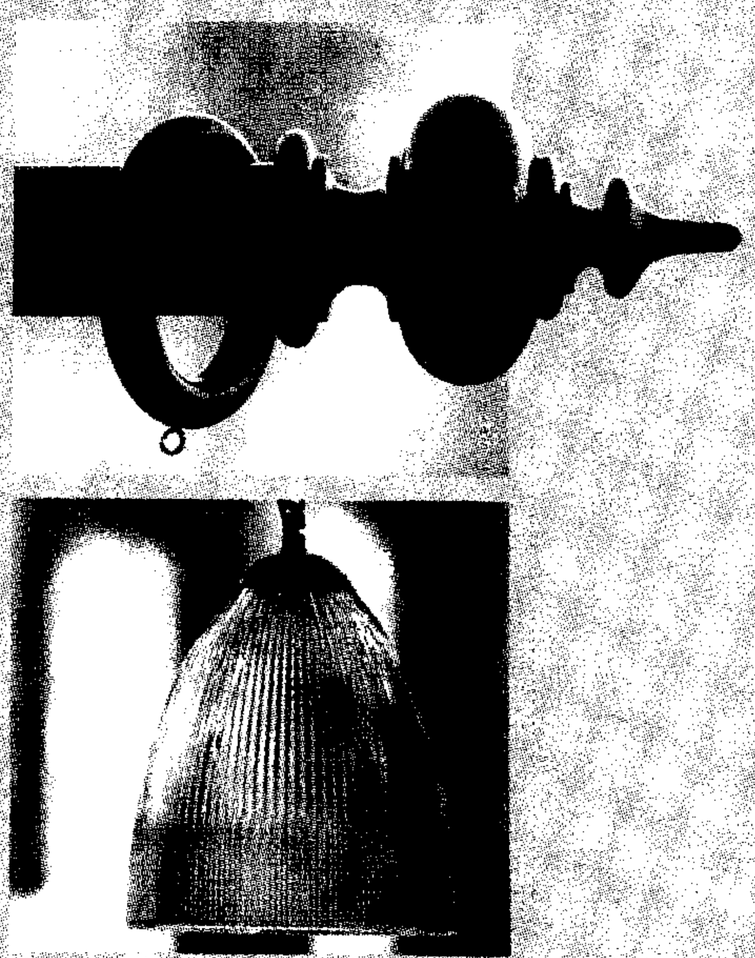
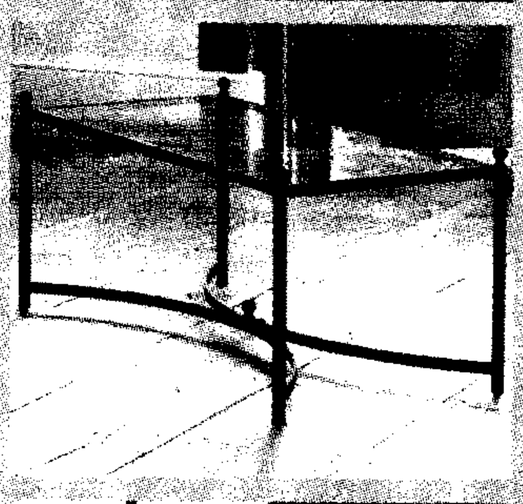
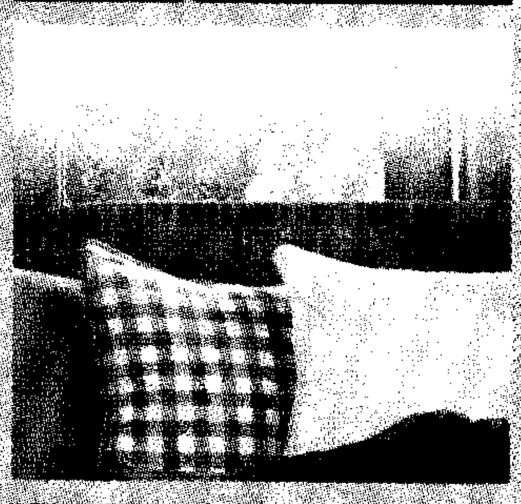
Just 8' x 15', an **Endless Pool**® is simple to maintain, economical to run, and easy to install inside or out. Discover the perfect pool for the British climate!

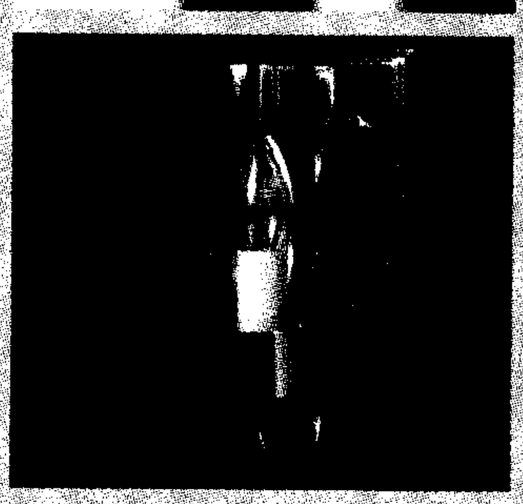
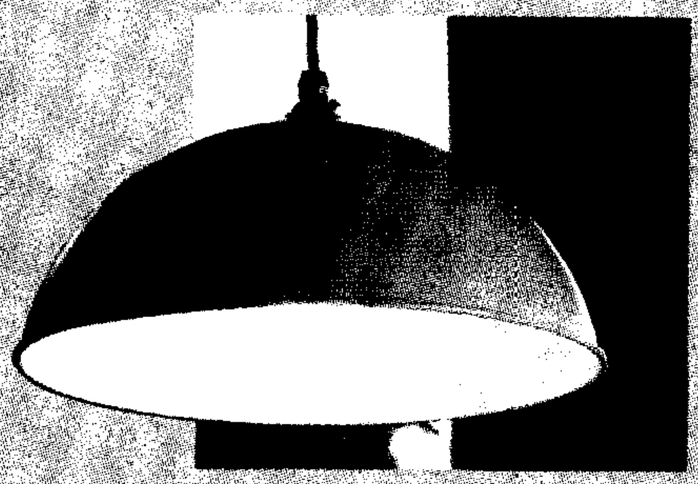
Already own a pool? Ask about the FASTLANE

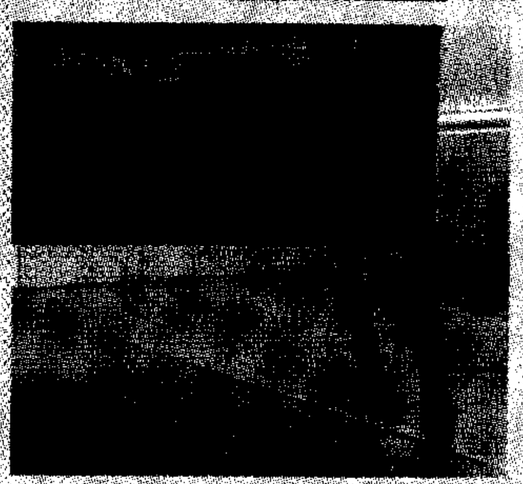
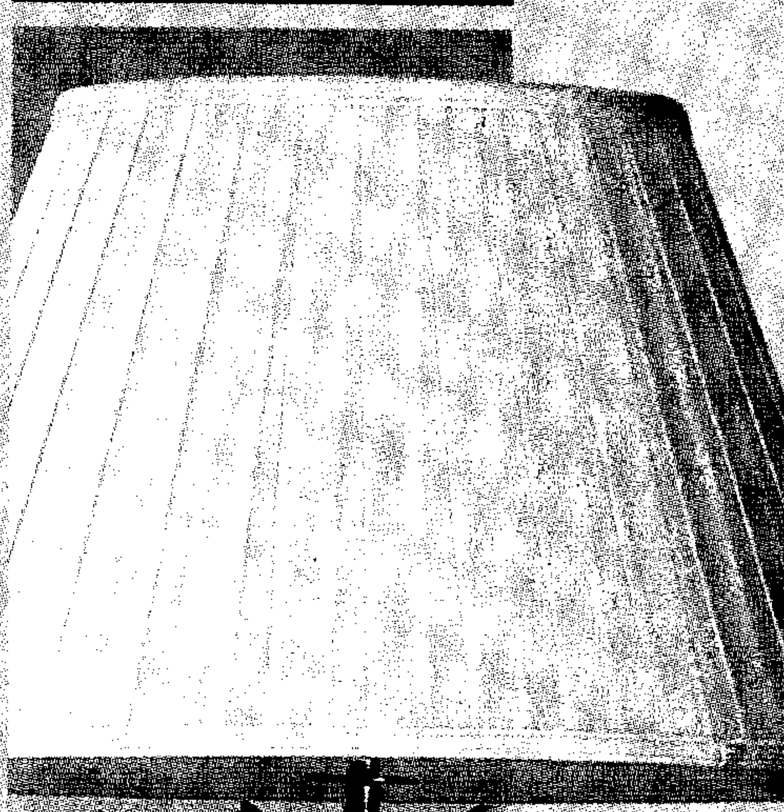
For a FREE DVD or Video Call:
UK 0800 028 1056, ext. 5528
IRL 1 800 557 810, ext. 5528
www.endlesspools.co.uk/5528

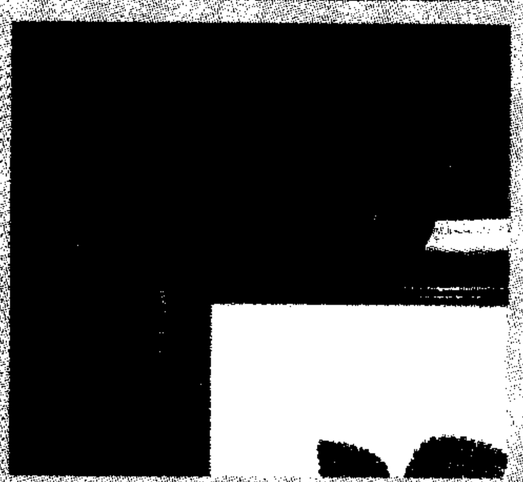
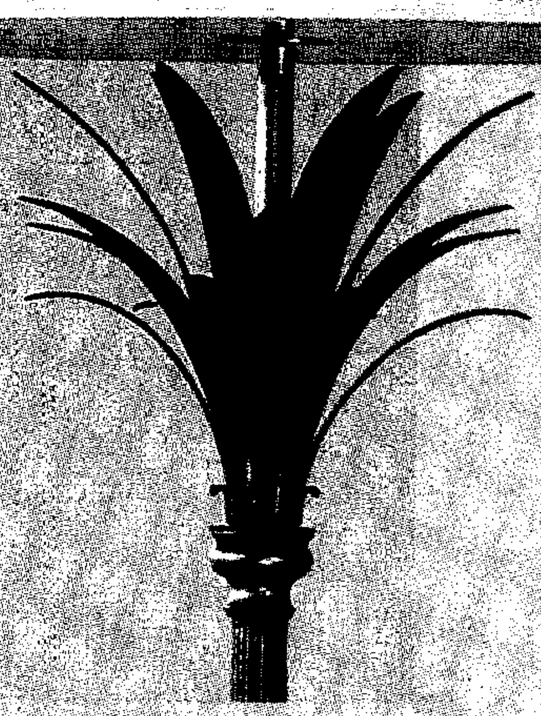
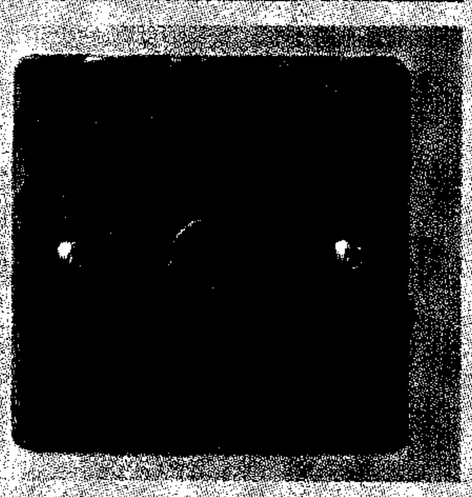
Jim Lawrence

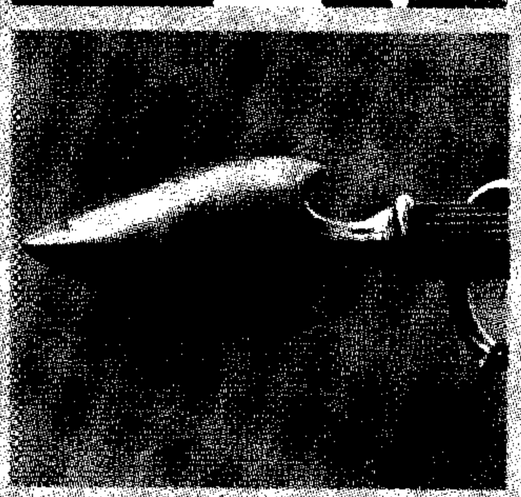
LIGHTING CURTAIN POLES SOFT FURNISHINGS IRONMONGERY FURNITURE



FOR OUR NEW FREE BROCHURE CALL 01206 265860 OR LOG ON TO WWW.JIM-LAWRENCE.CO.UK

JIM LAWRENCE TRADITIONAL IRONWORK LTD. SCOTLAND HALL FARM. STOKE BY NAYLAND, COLCHESTER. ESSEX CO6 4QG

E-MAIL - SALES@JIM-LAWRENCE.CO.UK FAX - 01206 262166

PRI060707

Worktime
that earns
more
play time.

That's bmi time.

Diamond Club, the [illegible]
generous frequent flyer [illegible]

You should be rewarded for all those
hours you put into work. Our frequent
flyer scheme is the quickest way to
earn some time back for yourself and,
with a choice of over 800 destinations,
you can get as far from work as you like.
Visit our website for details.

flybmi.com

9 770032 888129 27 >

bmi
A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER